THE CASE FOR EVANGELICAL MODERNISM

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A STUDY OF THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY

BY

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DEDICATED

IN SINCERE AFFECTION AND ESTEEM

TO MY FRIEND AND FORMER PRINCIPAL,

THE REVEREND EBENEZER GRIFFITH-JONES,

B.A., D.D.,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THIRTEEN YEARS' SERVICE

AS A MEMBER OF HIS STAFF

AT THE YORKSHIRE UNITED INDEPENDENT COLLEGE,

BRADFORD,

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PREFACE

WHEN I was invited to deliver four theological lectures in the University College of North Wales at Bangor during the Michaelmas term of last year, I felt I ought to take advantage of the occasion to set forth systematically the conclusions which had been taking shape in my mind in the course of the past ten years regarding certain grave theological issues that have recently been engaging the thoughts of Christian men. In preparing the text of the lectures, I had of course to observe rigidly the limits of length necessitated by the amount of time allowable for their actual delivery. Yet at numerous points I felt the need of supplementing the spoken word with references to relevant literature and with sundry elaborations and explanations of my own: and my manuscript consequently got loaded with footnotes containing this subsidiary matter.

When later the question arose of putting the lectures into a form suitable for publication, it became clear that nothing less than a recasting of the whole material would meet the case. In carrying out this revision, I discarded a large

number of the literary references which I had at first hoped to include, and I embodied in the text most of the comment and discussion which had previously been put in the footnotes because there was not sufficient time to read it as part of the lectures. What the reader has before him, therefore, is really a newly-written book, based on the lectures delivered at Bangor to a miscellaneous audience consisting of students, ministers of religion, and members of the general public, but only very roughly representing what was actually read to them. The four "lectures" have become four "chapters"; and only an occasional lapse into the first person singular and an occasional semi-colloquialism remain to distinguish the style from that of a purely literary production.

The lectures were entitled 'Christian Faith in its relation to History and to Truth'. In order to make the designation somewhat more specific, I have altered this into what now stands on the title-page. Some may regret—on the ground of its ambiguity—the appearance of the word "Modernism" in the title: and though I have explained in the first chapter the precise sense in which I accept the term as a name for my own position, it may perhaps be well to devote a few lines here to the defence of my choice.

The word itself raises certain broad issues which cannot in the end be evaded. Something is gained,

therefore, by the adoption of it for the very purpose of clearing up, as far as possible, the confusion at present attending its popular use. The term "Modernism" was originally employed to describe the position of certain French Catholics who, round about the beginning of this century, endeavoured to harmonize their own critical views regarding Scripture, Church-History, and Dogma, with continued loyalty to the Roman Church.[1] In later years, however, it has come to be popularly used in the wider sense of the general acceptance of a new critical attitude in the interpretation both of Scripture and of traditional Christian doctrines, in conformity with the methods and results of modern knowledge, but without regard to any specifically Roman requirements. It is true that some persons known to themselves and others as "modernists" have indulged in a somewhat undiscerning and cavalier treatment of the Bible and of the Church's traditional doctrines. To many "liberal" or progressive Christian thinkers, the consequent associations of the word "modernist" seem good reason for declining to be themselves designated by it. But this refusal results in the infliction, however unintentional and indirect, of some real injustice on many who share both their critical standpoint and their evangelical spirit, but

[1] See Dean Inge's interesting account of them in *Outspoken Essays*, i. 137–171.

who, unable in conscience to decline the title, are thus left to bear alone the undeserved reproach brought upon it by the extremists to whom I have alluded. The word, however, ought not to be just sacrificed—because of its partial ambiguity—to what is largely conservative prejudice. It has, in fact, established itself as a widely-recognized name for that willingness to modify doctrine, in the light of newly-acquired truth, which is fully compatible with a firm adherence to the Christian Gospel and so preserves a real continuity with the essential spirit of the New Testament. It is in this sense alone—as is indicated by the addition of the adjective "Evangelical"—that I have used the word "Modernism" on my title-page. The term "Liberal Modernism", which occasionally appears in the following pages, does not—I need hardly say—indicate a specially advanced or radical form of Modernism in general: it is meant to recall the historical connexion of Evangelical Modernism with the "Liberal Christianity" out of which it has developed, and with which it is so closely identified.

Since the lectures were delivered, fresh light has been thrown on the state of theological opinion in Anglican circles by the publication, early this year, of the Archbishops' Committee's Report on 'Doctrine in the Church of England'. The Report appeared too late for me to incorporate in

my book any considerable reference to its findings; and I have therefore had to limit myself to a couple of allusions in the footnotes. But its publication is a welcome sign of the fact that, despite its Creeds and formularies, the Church of England has gone a long way towards recognizing the force of certain Liberal or Modernist contentions. Mr. Guy Kendall, formerly Headmaster of University College School, London, remarks that "The first summaries, which appeared in the newspapers, of the Report on Doctrine, made it plain that many valuable concessions had been made in the direction of Liberalism": and Lieutenant-Colonel E. N. Mozley goes so far as to say: "That it is a Charter for Modernist Churchmen is indubitable".[1] These declarations give, I fully realize, only one side of the case; and I have no wish to exaggerate that side. Still, the fact remains that the Report is of very great interest and significance for the extent to which it does recognize the need for theological freedom and reinterpretation.

It remains for me only to express my sincere thanks, first to the Theological Faculty of the University College, Bangor, for honouring me with their invitation to lecture, next, to the Principal of the College, Mr. D. Emrys Evans, M.A., B.Litt., and to various members of his staff, for

[1] *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1938, 365, 378.

the kindness and courtesy with which they made and carried through all the arrangements, then to the members of the audience for their patience, appreciation, and tolerance (when dissenting), and lastly, to the various friends who at my request assisted me with valuable advice and criticism when the lectures were in course of preparation and later when I was revising them with a view to publication.

C. J. C.

OXFORD, *May* 1938.

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CHAPTER I

THE WAY TO ORTHODOXY

CHRISTIANS have needed from time to time in the past to be warned against the disposition to think of their religion as being in a state of decline. Yet it is difficult to escape the conviction that—in the welter and ferment of these present days—Christianity is under a heavier cloud than any that has overshadowed it since the days of Constantine.[1] There can at all events be no mistaking the chaos into which the rapid changes of human thought and feeling as regards religion have during the last few decades been bringing us. Such a condition of unsettlement naturally furnishes occasion for the outpouring of numerous pleas and contentions, and constitutes a temptation to every man who feels strongly on religious issues to urge that the prevalent collapse is mainly due to the neglect of the thing that is dearest and truest to him, and that the one way of recovery

[1] See the arts. entitled 'Is Belief out-of-date?' and 'Have we passed the age of Religion?', contributed by André Bremond, S.J., and K. S. Latourette respectively, to *Journ. of Relig.* for April and October, 1936. Cf. also Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 88 ("At present the signs of the times forbode a new estrangement of the nations from the Gospel"); Brunner, *Philos. of Relig.*, 145 ("this life is characterized by an increasing emancipation of culture from religion").

lies in a general return to it. The chorus of voices, however, does not necessarily result in mere babel: if it witnesses to man's extremity, it witnesses also to God's opportunity. The war of words testifies that the time is ripe for a rediscovery of the eternal values of religion and a reformulation of the doctrines in which those values can be expounded and proclaimed to our modern world.

Now if advantage is to be taken of this opportunity, due regard must be had to the conditions that govern all healthy discussion. We know only too well how unpleasing in the eyes of many the shortcomings of theological controversialists have rendered theological controversy. The atmosphere of debate has too often been vitiated by impatience, pride, and uncharitableness. Too often has the attempt been made to discredit an antagonist, not by showing his view to be mistaken, but by the simpler expedient of stigmatizing it with some question-begging label. There is much truth in the late Canon Streeter's ironical remark in his book on 'The Primitive Church' (196 n.): "In religious controversy, it is commonly words, not their meaning, that matters". But however well the method of refuting by means of labels may befit a browbeating lawyer or the dictator of a totalitarian state, in theological research it leads nowhere. The first pre-requisite for such research is a profound reverence—reverence for the mind

and vision of the other man, and reverence for the vastness and sanctity of the truth of God. The former, at least, would come more easily if more attention were paid to the necessarily limited range and capacity of each individual mind and each particular stage of human thought. It is impossible, not only for the natural man, as Paul says, to know the things of the Spirit of God, but even for the spiritual man to know them *in their entirety*. The truth is too vast for any single mind to encompass. What we each grasp is at best a fragment; and as the personal equation means that the limitations set to our spiritual vision affect us in different ways, it is unlikely that my fragment of truth and my neighbour's fragment of truth will ever exactly coincide. It behoves me therefore to take good account of what he professes to see, lest I miss some portion which otherwise I might possess. The same holds good vice versa with him. Even so, absolute completeness will in this life always be beyond our reach, for the deep things of God cannot be fully measured by the plummet of the human mind. As Dr. W. N. Clarke has reminded us, "A wise student will not be disconcerted if he finds in his system gaps that at present he cannot fill".[1]

But, it may be asked, is the preservation of all the amenities of debate really compatible in practice

[1] *Outl. of Christian Theol.*, 61.

with vigorous argument on this side and on that? Assuredly it is. "The idea that vigorous controversy is incompatible with Christian charity, though common in the secular Press, is of course to be repudiated".[1] The analogy which helps us best to see the compatibility between friendliness and controversy is that of the cricket-field. There we have a demonstration of how the pugnacious rivalry of men can be indulged to the very full, not only without rancour, but in friendly co-operation productive of nothing but good. I know no reason why precisely the same conditions should not prevail on the field of theological controversy, provided such controversy is conducted in the noble and reverent spirit that should animate the enterprise.[2] So viewed, theological controversy becomes a genuine co-operation undertaken in a great cause. The disputant should be sincerely glad that the views for which he argues meet with a certain amount of dissent and opposition. It should comfort him to know that truth is being sought from many directions and with many different instruments: for this means that there is less chance of what he himself may hitherto have missed being missed altogether.

I do not therefore understand the reverence

[1] E. Bevan in *Hibbert Journ.*, Jan. 1933, 188.

[2] F. C. Bryan (in *The Lord of Life*, 247) observes that "the service of humanity" provides a true sublimation of the instinct of pugnacity. Of such service, all genuine "contentio veritatis" is surely a part.

requisite for all helpful debate in religious matters as necessarily excluding a certain "joy of battle" on the part of the individual participant. Just as, in a well-played game, stout fighting ministers to the welfare of both sides, so, in the serious task of investigating divine truth, there is real value in the friendly clash of conflicting views. In all Christian charity, therefore, I mean to put up as good a case as I can for the opinions I wish to express: and I shall do so, not because I claim any sort of omniscience for myself or any finality for my opinions, but as offering a contribution to a task in which, because it is near to my heart, I desire to be allowed to co-operate. If at times I seem to be hitting hard, let that be regarded but as the batsman's reply to the bowler's deadly body-line shots—painful, it may be, at the moment, but quite a fair contribution to the game as a whole. The enterprise is one to which we are called by God Himself; and therefore—in the words of the great Welsh hymn-writer—

> "may the sharpness of the strife
> Be to His greater praise!"

It will not be disputed that the Christian religion arose out of the new relationships with God and their fellows, into which men were led by putting their trust in Jesus Christ. I hardly need to attempt in this place a full and exact account of

these new relationships. It will suffice to remind ourselves that Christians are essentially those for whom God in Christ has wrought great things whereof they are glad, those who through Christ have found God, have tasted His love, and experienced His saving, cleansing, and uplifting power. The acceptance of this new spiritual and moral redemption naturally called from the outset for certain concomitant beliefs regarding Jesus, God, and humanity. Hence began the long process of doctrine-building—a process consisting essentially in the work of human reflection and reason upon those Divine realities and activities which through Jesus were now discerned and experienced by men. Of that process it may be said at once that it was both inevitable and morally justified. Altogether apart from the stimulus given to it by the need that was felt of refuting heretics, it followed naturally from the conscientious and instinctive desire of men to use the brains that God had given them on the most important concerns of life. Coleridge remarks, in his 'Aids to Reflection': "It is worthy of especial observation, that the Scriptures are distinguished from all other writings pretending to inspiration, by the strong and frequent recommendations of knowledge, and a spirit of inquiry".[1] The frequent appeal made by Jesus that his followers should think

[1] Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, comment on Aphorism xv.

out the meaning of their experiences and of what they heard from him amply justifies these words.

Now although the faith in Jesus whereby his revelation is received is not to be identified with, still less subordinated to, the doctrines which it is found to imply, those doctrines themselves cannot rightly be regarded with indifference as unimportant. It is indeed difficult to conceive of such faith in complete detachment from all doctrine: some doctrine goes along with even the most elementary faith, and the two necessarily react on one another as time goes on. The question then arises, what is the relation between the initial basic faith and the ensuing doctrine? Or, more particularly, is any definable minimum of the latter "essential" to authentic Christianity, and if so, of what precisely does it consist? We are thus landed back again at Harnack's old question, "What is Christianity?" It is natural enough to say, as Harnack does, that we must go to history for the answer. But history of itself does not answer the question of essentiality. It can tell us what beliefs have been held by Christians at various times; and if we were studying Buddhism or Shintoism, that sort of knowledge might suffice for our purpose. But the Christian studying Christianity wants to know, not only what *has* been believed, but what has been *rightly* believed.

What, he asks, is the true " orthodoxy ", which as orthodoxy is essential to the Christian religion?

In discussing the questions here raised and endeavouring to find answers to them, I propose to adopt and expound the position which has come to be known among us as " Liberal Modernism ", or, as it might equally well be designated, " Evangelical Modernism ". I am only too painfully aware that, in undertaking to defend Modernism in any form, I am championing an unpopular cause—one against which the main current of present-day theology is strongly set. Liberal Modernism has indeed been having lately rather a bad press. Any stick is nowadays good enough to belabour it withal. Many are only too ready to cry " Voilà l'ennemi ! ", or " Écrasez l'infâme ! "[1] They have not always precisely the same entity in mind, nor do they always blame the thing they decry for the same defects, or denounce it in the same terms: but according to one and another, Modernism today unduly exalts man, and teaches him to deify himself, to emancipate himself from God's authority, and to believe that he is completely self-sufficient: it therefore largely ignores the problem of sin and evil, and has an unwarranted

[1] I gladly note a refreshing exception—Rev. F. L. Cross, of Pusey House, Oxford, in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1932, 468: " We (at least many of us [i.e. Anglo-Catholics]) no longer wish to see theological liberalism attacked ".

confidence in the certainty of human progress. It is accused also of rejecting the authority and witness of the Bible, dishonestly misdating its documents, denying the Lordship, Divinity, and saving power of Jesus, denying the Incarnation and Resurrection, having no place for sacrifice, and in general abandoning the Christian Gospel. It is branded as individualistic, intellectualistic, rationalistic, humanistic, and optimistic in the wrong senses, subjective and anarchic, proud, foolish, poisonous, and even Satanic. It is held responsible for the decline of the churches, and having been weighed in the balance and found wanting, may be pronounced dead.

This is, indeed, a serious indictment: and I am not prepared to deny that there *are* individuals and even groups within the Modernist movement as a whole against whom one or other of these charges might deservedly be brought. What I do deny is that any part of this sweeping accusation is true as regards that Liberal Modernism which has found a home for itself in the Anglican Modern Churchmen's Union and in the Free Churches generally, and in which I was myself nurtured by my Alma Mater in Oxford. Instead, however, of making general affirmations about so loosely-defined a thing as Modernism, I had better proceed to make clear the precise sense in whch I am prepared to be described as a "Liberal" or "Evangelical Modernist".

To begin with, I would point out that what we call "Liberal" or "Evangelical Modernism" is a species within the genus "Christian"; and I suggest that the very use of such a specific label within its Christian context presupposes belief in the existence, sovereignty, and goodness of God, in the Lordship and Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, and in the reality and power of the Christian Gospel of Salvation. Accusations, therefore, to the effect that Liberal Modernists have abandoned these beliefs ought never to have been made except against such individuals as can be specifically proved to lie open to them.

By Liberal Modernism then I mean that attitude to Christian doctrine which, taking due account of the occasional conflict between truth and tradition, rejects the customary identification of tradition and orthodoxy, and sees the real test of orthodoxy (i.e. right belief) in truth.[1] For the Liberal Modernist, essential Christianity is the truth relevant to Christian salvation: it may or may not be that which men have traditionally regarded as essential Christianity. The remainder of this chapter will consist of an explication and defence of the position thus defined.

Dean Inge has given us a simple and satisfying definition of truth. "By Truth I mean right

[1] Cf. G. K. A. Bell in *Mysterium Christi*, 279: "When we describe the teaching of the Church as Orthodoxy we ought to mean that it is right-thinking. . . . Christianity is Truth. What is alien from the truth is not Christian. . . ."

thinking, the correspondence of our minds with the nature of things ".[1] This definition means what it says, and excludes any pragmatic, " as-if "-conception of truth, of the kind once advocated by the French Catholic Modernists. The recognition of the claims of truth, in the simple, unsophisticated sense of the word, as sacred and supreme, is a moral axiom which the Christian theologian for one can never afford to forget. It is, as the Dean says, the reason " why the work of the scholar, the scientific investigator, and the philosopher, is a branch of the larger priesthood, a direct worship of God ".[2] In somewhat the same way as Richard Lovelace wrote to his sweetheart :

" I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more",

the theologian best displays his loyalty to the Christian religion by giving the first place in all things to truth. For nothing could be more damaging to his power to serve the cause of Christ than any suspicion on the part of his audience or his readers that his respect for tradition rendered him unwilling to face certain facts. The claim of truth stands in its own right. It does not depend on the consent of majorities. It is not cancelled by the plea that this or that truth may exasperate men, or may have some other unwelcome " tend-

[1] In *Hibbert Journ.*, July 1920, 653. [2] *Hibbert Journ.* loc. cit.

ency ".[1] It is not affected by its harmony or disharmony with the mental habits of " the modern man " as such.[2] Nor finally is it put out of court by the fact that error has on occasions been fruitful in good results (especially when no corrective was within reach), and that situations sometimes arise in which one has to refrain from imparting a particular truth to a particular person.[3]

Christian teachers have, of course, always claimed that the essential beliefs of their religion were true. We recall how frequently in the Johannine writings use is made of the terms *ἀλήθεια*, *ἀληθινός*, *ἀληθής*, and *ἀληθῶς*, in order to express in one way or another the conviction of the authors that the Christian religion alone brings man into touch with absolute reality. Irenæus praises Polycarp for " having always taught the things which he learned from the Apostles, which also the Church hands on, and which alone are true ".[4] The complement

[1] Cf. W. E. Channing, *Works*, i. 145, 279 f.

[2] Cf. R. A. Edwards in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1936, 445 f., 449; Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 188 (" . . . a Gospel accommodated to the spirit of the age is no Gospel at all ").

[3] The ethical problem of " the medicinal lie " is of great interest. I have discussed it briefly in my *Catholicism and Christianity*, 500–502: but it can hardly be held to affect seriously the general obligation of the Christian thinker to regard the claims of truth as supreme. The same may be said of the so-called " ministry of error "—a subject on which my friend Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson has contributed a suggestive article to the spring number 1936 of *Religion in Life*, 182–190: inter alia, he says (189), " Yet the admission that the attainment of intellectual truth is not the primary end of religion does not exonerate us from seeking truth, and fighting for truth, however relative ".

[4] Iren., *Adv. Haer.*, III. iii. 4 (. . . *ἃ καὶ μόνα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ*): cf. IV. xxxiii. 8 (" Agnitio vera est Apostolorum doctrina, . . ."). Tertullian as Montanist contended that " dominus noster Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem, cognominavit " (*De Virg. Vel.*, 1).

of the conviction that essential Christianity is true is the conviction that all relevant truth is also Christian. It was Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century A.D., who first clearly asserted this. After referring to the good teaching of Plato, the Stoics, and others, he proceeds: "For each man, with his share of the spermatic Divine Logos, spoke well whenever he saw what was congruous with it. . . . Whatever things therefore have been well said among all men belong to us Christians. . . ." [1] It was on this ground that he pronounced Socrates, Heraclitus, Abraham, Elijah, and others, "who had lived along with reason (Logos)", to have been Christians.[2] Justin's sympathetic suggestion was followed up by Clement of Alexandria, who held that Greek philosophy was a gift of God, making possible the comprehension of Divine truth, and by Origen, who argued that all truth was the gift of the Logos. Ambrose echoes it in the words: "Every true saying, whoever be its author, is from the Holy Spirit". Erasmus, as we might expect, sympathized with the idea, though his exclamation, "Holy Socrates, pray for us", was probably meant as a harmless jest. His contemporary John Colet contended that all truth was consistent with Chris-

[1] Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, II. xiii. 3 f.

[2] Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, I. xlvi. 3. On the grandeur and significance of his contention, see Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma* (Eng. trans.), ii. 200 f., and *Mission and Expansion* (Eng. trans.), i. 254.

tianity. A present-day author voices the same great conviction when he writes: "Do we not claim that Christianity is to be believed because it is true and for no other reason? All truth comes from God, and in its measure reveals God".[1]

The conviction that the essence of Christianity is co-terminous with relevant truth follows naturally from the conviction of its adherents that it is the absolute and final religion.[2] A Christian endeavouring to discover the essentials of Mohammedanism or Hinduism can do so without reference to the objective truth of the doctrines he discovers, simply because he is not convinced that either of these religions has any claim to be considered as absolute or final. Not so if what he is studying be Christianity. Nothing but an absolute and final religion will then satisfy him: and so long as Christianity satisfies him, he must needs view it as identical with such truth as is relevant to his relationship with God. For him to defend Christianity on any basis less wide and deep than this is tacitly to treat it, not as the absolute religion, but as one in a crowd of ethnic faiths, possessed of only partial or relative validity.

This being so, it is the more remarkable that

[1] E. J. Bicknell in *A New Comm. on Holy Script.* (ed. Gore, etc.), i. 20a.

[2] Barthians argue as if the recognition of the finality and uniqueness of Christianity were a monopoly of their own, and incompatible with any explanation of Christianity on evolutionary lines (cf. Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 32; Brunner, *Philos. of Relig.*, 109)—a quite gratuitous assumption (see H. H. Farmer in *The Lord of Life*, 283 f.).

some modern writers—perhaps through their great reverence for the past and their yearning for an objective and (as they often put it) a distinctively "Christian" standard—are in discussion willing for the sake of argument to conceive the possibility of some one or other item in "essential Christianity" being found incredible, i.e. untrue in point of fact. A second and somewhat less obtrusive form of what is virtually the same attitude to Christian tradition is taken up by those who try to prove the orthodoxy of some particular doctrine, not by its inherent truth, but by the authority of the ecclesiastical tradition behind it. Dr. C. C. J. Webb tells (at second hand) a story of a Roman Catholic, who as such accepted all the doctrines of the Church on the ground that they were authoritatively revealed by God, and "who said to an 'Anglo-Catholic' that he (the Anglo-Catholic) seemed indeed to believe all the doctrines of the Church, but for the quite irrelevant reason that they were true".[1] The story is, as Dr. Webb admits, a caricature: but it illustrates our point.

Yet a third manifestation of this reluctance to accept truth boldly as the supreme test is the fear of some tension arising between the untrammelled quest for truth and due loyalty to our Christian commitments.[2] Now no doubt it is possible in a

[1] *Journ. of Theol. Stud.*, July 1936, 329.

[2] This tension is almost identical with that between pragmatism and rationalism, dealt with by Dr. H. H. Farmer in *The Lord of Life*, 272.

purely abstract manner to picture the untrammelled quest for truth eventuating in the conclusion that God does not exist, or is evil and unloving, or that Jesus never lived. What then, it is asked in dismay, would become of our Christian commitments? I answer that, so long as the possibility remains purely formal, I can see no danger in it, just as I have no fear that the evidence of our senses will ever be found to be deceptive, the rules of the syllogism fallacious, kindness morally wrong, or the rainbow ugly. We cannot divorce the conception of God from that of reality, the conception of Christian salvation from that of true blessedness. And in any case, what doth it profit a man to say, "The bare possibility of finding my beliefs untrue is so distressing to me, that the less I enquire after their truth the better"? The enlargement of our grasp of truth may indeed bring us temporary pain; but man's long experience of the grace of God in Christ cannot be gainsaid or ignored. Time cannot undo what once was true: and intuition and experience alike warrant our trust that to draw nearer to truth is to draw nearer to God.

It is the exact converse of the sceptic's dread that Christianity *may* possibly be true, such as was felt by Soames Forsyte at his uncle's funeral-service. "Soames would have liked to stay outside in the sunshine. He didn't believe a word of it; on the other hand, it was a form of insurance which could not safely be neglected, in case there might be something in it after all" (Galsworthy, *Forsyte Saga*, 1094). F. D. Maurice (quoted by Mark Pattison in *Essays and Reviews* [ed. 1861], 296) refers to the view that "it is safer to believe in a God, lest, if there should happen to be one, he might send us to hell for denying his existence".

The existence of this attitude of hesitancy which I have just been criticizing constitutes, I submit, a justification of my definition of Liberal Modernism as the view which makes truth the real test of orthodoxy—a definition which might otherwise seem provocative to the point of offence. This definition implies that whatever validity the traditional Christian doctrines possess they owe ultimately, not to their antiquity, nor to their ubiquity, nor even to their Scripturality, but to their capacity to vindicate themselves to Christian hearts and minds as true. The essence of the Gospel consists, not necessarily in what our Christian predecessors proclaimed, but in what the Spirit of the living God reveals to us as true, rejoicing the heart and enlightening the eyes.

If then orthodoxy is simply the possession of the relevant truth, what is the way to it? That, of course, is the question on which opinions so widely diverge. I suggest that the right answer is to be found by drawing an analogy from our procedure for the attainment of truth in another field, one in which we all agree that we *do* in great measure obtain it—I mean, natural science. In that field we know what it is to enlarge our understanding of reality: why should not our experience there teach us how we may do the same in the field of theology?

Many will answer at once, "Because the two fields are radically different. In science, man acquires truth by the unaided exercise of his reason, whereas in the Christian religion he has to deal with realities which, though not contrary to reason, his unaided reason could never reach, but which are given to him through Divine revelation and are appropriated in the first place, not by his reason, but by his faith". That is the ground on which good men, from the days of Thomas Aquinas to those of Emil Brunner, have denied the analogy between theology and natural science, so far as concerns the method by which man reaches truth. I wish however to challenge the distinction so grounded as fallacious.

It is not the case that the truths of natural science are attained by man's unaided reason, without the bestowal of revelation on God's part or the exercise of faith on man's. God's revelation here consists in part in the creation of the natural world, and His presentation of it to man as a field for his reverent investigation. Man's unaided reason (which is really a mere abstraction) would learn no astronomy or botany, had not God revealed to him the stars and the flowers. God's revelation is also seen in the mental equipment He has conferred on man, and in the natural kinship of man's mind with the truth of things. And man appropriates this divine revelation, not

by reasoning, but by faith. The great axioms on which all science rests—the uniformity of nature, the self-consistency of truth, the reliability of the senses and of the laws of reasoning—are not things that have first to be "proved" before we can use them; they are taken for granted, perhaps unconsciously presupposed, in any case accepted on faith. Hence whenever science makes a discovery, it may be quite truly and soberly described as a revelation from God.

Conversely, it is not the case that religious doctrines (as distinct from that self-commitment to God through Christ which is the basis of the Christian life) are imparted to man by God through a revelation which does not involve active scrutiny on the part of human reason, and which therefore fences them off from all likeness to scientific discoveries. As in science, so in religion, one starts with an act of faith, and then proceeds by the use of the reason to build doctrine upon it. Belief in God is not based at bottom on a process of reasoning. You may indeed speak of "proving" the existence of God, if by "proof" you mean either (*a*) an inductive argument (such as that based upon the presence of design in Nature), which, though useful, can never be logically quite cogent, or (*b*) an a posteriori verification of an assumption made to start with. But you cannot give a really demonstrative (i.e. deductive or

syllogistic) proof of God's existence, for the simple reason that there are no premises big enough from which to infer the existence of the "Lord of all being".[1] Belief in God consists really of an axiomatic or intuitive act of trust which it is natural for man, as a moral and spiritual being, to make, just as it is natural for him, as a mathematical being, to believe that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. In other words, belief in God depends at bottom not on argument but on spiritual experience—experience which we are no more entitled to treat as illusory than we are to regard as illusory our sense-experience. We may rightly apply the word "revelation" to the bestowal of such spiritual experience, as also to the urge and the capacity to think out its significance. But the actual doctrines to which our thinking leads are properly the work of reason. We may describe them as "revealed" if we wish, but only if by doing so we do not intend to contrast them with the true findings of reason in scientific research, as if these latter were not in any sense revealed. Catholics, for instance, claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is a revealed truth, not an achievement of human reason.[2] But whatever we may think of the

[1] I seem to be here on common ground, at least negatively, with Karl Barth (*Credo*, 15 f.).

[2] Cf. R. A. Knox, *Belief of Catholics*, 164; J. K. Mozley in *Expos. Times*, Sept. 1932, 537 b ("The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is

revelational character of the experiences out of which the doctrine of the Trinity grew, nothing is plainer than that the doctrine itself was the fruit of a long-drawn-out process of reflection and argument, as the history of Christian doctrine in the first four centuries A.D. plainly shows. The plea that it was not so is surely perverse. Moreover, if the word "revelation" is to be used for a humanly-produced doctrine or document, as distinct from the facts and experiences which evoke the individual's inward trust in God, then a revelation is a thing the genuineness of which has to be tested in order that it may be known whether it is (as true) really worthy of that name. That is a test which only the human heart and mind can apply.[1]

I submit therefore that the customary distinction drawn between religious knowledge as based on revelation and scientific knowledge as based on reason proves on examination to be illusory, so far as concerns, not the nature of the things known, but the epistemology involved. Revelation and faith are present in science as well as in theology: reason is present in theology as well as in science.

"When a truth, we say, comes home to the mind, there is always a revelation; equally so with Newton's

bound up with the Christian doctrine of revelation and of faith. It is quite wrong to look upon it as metaphysical speculation"). Father Cuthbert (in *God and the Supernatural*, 169) makes a similar claim as regards the Catholic Christology.

[1] Cf. Mark Pattison, in *Essays and Reviews* (ed. 1861), 263 f., 267–269.

apple and Simon Peter's confession of the Christ. When the mind lays hold of any fragment of reality, you may call it discovery or reason, but the same thing occurs, though it is viewed from the other standpoint. All revelation must be to a mind that is capable of receiving it, and all discovery implies that truth reveals and manifests itself to a discoverer ".[1]

In thus vindicating the analogy between science and theology, I am not forgetting that the Thomist view allows that a certain amount of real knowledge of God can be had through natural religion, that is, without revelation (as Thomas Aquinas used the term), that modern Roman Catholics and some others (Brunner, for example) draw a distinction between God's general revelation of Himself in Nature and in natural religion and His special revelation in Christ, and that yet others somewhat similarly desire to reserve the word " revelation " for God's personal approach to man as distinguished from the impersonal self-presentation of abstract truth. I fully recognize, of course, that, in view of the special character of the Christian religion as centred in the person of Jesus, the distinction provided for in these several ways is in some form necessary : but I maintain that it does not invalidate our analogy between science and theology, or necessitate a special epistemology for the latter. The Christian facts are, after all, a part of the same world of

[1] R. B. Tollinton in *Modern Churchman*, Sept. 1921, 238.

objective reality as embraces the facts on which so-called natural religion rests, and are presented to the same discerning human recipient, with his intellectual, moral, and spiritual endowments.

Now if the analogy I have drawn be valid, the way to orthodoxy will become clear to us as we consider the several principles involved in man's successful quest for scientific truth. These I understand to be as follows:—

(1) The basis of operations is the world of objective reality: things as they are are the scientist's ultimate authority. So also the Christian begins with God, Whose Being is the ultimate authority for his thought, and Whose Will is the ultimate authority for his conduct. In both cases the recognition of this authority and of his competence to learn from it is an act of faith, an act done spontaneously because it is natural and necessary for man, being what he is, to do it. "He who comes to God must trust that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him out"—as the author of 'Hebrews' (xi. 6) truly declares. The doing of this act of faith does not depend on man's ability to embrace and understand the whole of reality: on the contrary, as in reverence he exercises his faith, he becomes increasingly aware of the wondrous and unspeakable infinity of the Divine life. So far from feeling self-sufficient, he

knows himself to be in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. He stands in awe before the majesty of Truth. Such reverence is, in the case of the scientist, often not consciously felt, just as the initial faith that goes along with it, however implicitly real, is often not explicitly affirmed. But the scientist is none the better for ignoring it: and the Christian theologian will certainly do his work badly, unless he first makes sure that he is beginning at the right point and in the right attitude. If he does that, he can in his subsequent operations afford to smile at the charge which, if he is a Liberal Modernist, is sure to be levelled at him sooner or later—the charge of "Rationalism".

(2) The human or subjective counterpart to Divine Truth is the faith, intelligence, and conscience of man. Man can believe that God exists and rewards those who seek Him, because as a son of God he is made in the Divine likeness, and has the Divine Spirit dwelling within him. "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!', the Spirit itself joins our own spirit in testifying that we are children of God" (Rom. viii. 15 f.). On the basis of this text, Calvin coined the phrase "the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit", as the name for the Christian's ability to see and interpret the truth of Scripture. The thought was further developed in the well-known Quaker doctrine of "the Inner Light", which means that God has

not only made man "incurably religious", but has also endowed him with ability progressively to recognize the truth when it is brought within the range of his vision. This Divine light shines not only in his initial faith, but in the intelligence with which he seeks to interpret and expound it; and his trust in its reliability is axiomatic, like his belief in God. Not only is man's mind akin to factual truth—so that if anything is true in point of fact, there is an inherent likelihood that in the long run he will believe it—but he possesses moral discernment also. In Byron's words, "Man's conscience is the oracle of God"; it answers subjectively to the objective goodness of God. Just as we cannot imagine God to be better than he actually is,[1] so we take it for granted that our own clear convictions as to what is morally good involve a judgment in regard to the character and will of God.[2] "The Kingdom of God", writes Dr. C. H. Dodd,

"is intrinsically *like* the processes of nature and of the daily life of men. . . . That human life, including the religious life, is a part of nature is distinctly stated in the well-known passage beginning 'Consider the

[1] Cf. C. F. D'Arcy (Archbishop of Armagh) in *The Atonement in History and in Life* (ed. Grensted), 277 ("If we believe that the highest thoughts about God are the truest—which is surely the very essence of faith—then . . ."), and H. G. Wood, *Christianity and the Nature of Hist.*, 204 ("What is worthy of God must be true of Him, . . .").

[2] Cf. A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy of Jesus and Personality*, 14, 20 ("To recognize an absolute moral obligation is an act of faith that in the ultimate reality of the universe goodwill dominates"), 55–57.

fowls of the air . . .' . . . Since nature and supernature are one order, you can take any part of that order and find in it illumination for other parts. Thus . . . the love of God is present in the natural affection of a father for his scapegrace son. This sense of the divineness of the natural order is the major premiss of all the parables, . . .".[1]

Jesus argues a fortiori from the human sense of duty to the Divine Goodness (e.g. Lk. xi. 13 = Mt. vii. 11), and confidently assumes that the quality, if not the degree, of the latter may be known from the former. Thus the call of duty brings us at length face to face with a personal Ruler, Who possesses an indefeasible right to our loyalty and obedience.[2]

(3) The student of science always needs to avail himself of the teaching of those who know more about the subject he is studying than he does himself. So too the seeker after God needs the guidance of experienced and therefore authoritative teachers. Within the vast field of the religious experience of the race, every part of which may have something to teach him, a unique place is filled by the Old Testament Scriptures, the record of Jesus' life and teaching, the rest of the New

[1] C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 22.

[2] Cf., however, the negative strictures of Brunner, *Philos. of Relig.*, 71 f. (" The moral idea of the good is no more God than is the theoretic idea of the true. . . . The identification of the moral idea with God is speculative idealism, . . ."), 76 (" . . . morality does not reach a truly personal relationship. . . . The universality of the idea makes it abstract and unreal. . . ."), 88 f.

Testament, and the witness and the doctrines of the Christian Church. It is no part of the Liberal Modernist attitude to despise or ignore the Christian Fathers, or indeed any historical witness to the ways of God with men.[1]

(4) While the inquirer, whether in science or theology, needs the help of teachers, the decision as to which teachers he shall trust is the autonomous act of his own private judgment. This is not true, of course, of the infant; but it *is* true of the responsible student, even if he starts by knowing nothing regarding the available teachers —for even then he selects someone upon whose advice as to teachers he believes he can rely. And this autonomy of judgment is just as real in the case of the Catholic and the Fundamentalist, as it is in that of the Liberal Protestant, for each has to decide, and does decide, by an act of private judgment, between the relative claims of different types of teachers.

(5) No teacher in science, however much trusted by an elementary learner, is ever rightly regarded as infallible, i.e. as *unconditionally* inerrant, inerrant beyond appeal and verification. His authority,

[1] This duty of revering Christian tradition is of course much emphasized by Barth (*Credo*, 8, 180–182: he compares respect for Church-doctrine to honouring father and mother), as well as by others (e.g., Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 95–97). W. Pauck of Chicago (in *Journ. of Relig.*, Apl. 1935, 160) hopes that the perspective of liberalism will be deepened by "a fresh positive understanding of the meaning of the classical doctrines of the historic church".

however real and great, is, strictly speaking, always provisional. The same holds good of religious teachers, and for the same reasons. This means, of course, that the competent learner in either field possesses (potentially from the first, and actually in increasing measure as he progresses) the right to test, and if need be to disagree with, his teacher's statements. To make such a declaration as this with regard to religious beliefs will, of course, lay me open to the vague and superficial charge of preaching " pure subjectivism " or " pure individualism ", of holding that every man can " believe what he likes " and is free to " pick and choose " as he pleases. I shall have something to say presently concerning our safeguards against error: but for the moment let me observe that what I am claiming for theology is nothing more than is already universally recognized as right in science, without any need being felt to raise an outcry about " subjectivism ". That the need of discarding some religious beliefs of the past arises from time to time is absolutely undeniable: and the reason why it does so arise is, as I have stated, that no religious teacher—or body of teachers—of the past is, in the nature of things, infallible. The painfulness of the change may readily be acknowledged; but the need for it is beyond contradiction, as the history of Christian doctrine itself abundantly proves.

In the early struggles of the Church with heresy, the notion that the doctrine of the Church could or should ever need to be changed was of course unwelcome. It was only after he became a Montanist that Tertullian pleaded that Christ has designated Himself as truth, not as custom.[1] In his pre-Montanist days, he had argued against the heretics that the command "Seek and ye shall find" was addressed to those who were not yet Christians, not to those already converted who, having found the truth in the Church's Rule of Faith, have no need for further search, but can rest in the sure possession of the truth.[2] The necessity for any change as regards "the essential and fundamental truths of divine wisdom and holiness" is, indeed, roundly denied by the evangelical historians Joseph and Isaac Milner, à propos of the controversies between Abailard and Bernard —on the assumption, of course, that there is no room for difference of judgment as to what these essentials are.[3] Somewhat similarly, Dr. B. J. Kidd urges that Christ had "delivered to His Apostles not merely the truth but the whole truth. Montanism stood for the legitimacy of accretive developments. But the Church admitted explanatory development alone".[4] Here again it is

[1] See above, p. 12 n. 4.
[2] Tertull., *De Praescr. Haeret.*, 8–14, 43.
[3] *Hist. of the Church of Christ* (about 1809), iii. 267 f.
[4] *Hist. of the Church to A.D. 461*, i. 293.

assumed that no question can arise as to which developments are the one, and which are the other. As applied, however, to Christian doctrines generally, the verdict of history points strongly to the need for occasional change.

The theory, for instance, that the redeeming death of Christ was a ransom paid to the devil has considerable support in certain passages of the New Testament and in the early Fathers, was vehemently defended by Bernard against Abailard, and held the field for nine hundred years; it was rejected by Anselm, on the ground, not that it was unscriptural or lacking in ecclesiastical authority, but that it involved unworthy thoughts about God.[1] No one would now contend that it was an integral element in orthodoxy, despite the fact that for nearly a millennium it was generally thought to be so.

Mr. Arnold Lunn says: "It is only in comparatively recent times that a man who described himself as a Christian would dare to deny the godhead of Christ or the Resurrection".[2] (He is here unwarrantably describing the Liberal Modernist *interpretation* of these doctrines as a denial of them). But in A.D. 325 the authoritative declaration of the

[1] Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*, i. 7: R. S. Franks, *Hist. of the Doctr. of the Work of Christ*, i. 164 ff., *The Atonement* (Dale Lectures), 14 f. Merrill (*Essays in Early Christ. Hist.*, 22) aptly quotes Roger Bacon's remark that "consuetudinis diuturnitas" was one of the four "maxima comprehendendae veritatis offendicula".

[2] In *Is Christianity True?*, 31.

Son's co-essentiality with the Father was recent: in 451 the insistence that Christ had two Natures but only one Person was recent: in 1100 the belief that Mary was conceived free from original sin was recent. Protestant history illustrates the same general fact. In 1520 Luther's assertion that the Church might be in the wrong as against an individual dissenter was recent: in 1660 the idea that religious persecution was immoral and un-Christian was quite novel: in 1700 the disapproval of witch-burning was a comparatively new idea: and in 1890 Christians had only recently begun to admit that belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and in the existence of a personal devil and of eternal punishment might possibly not be among the essentials of the faith.

In no province but that of traditional theology would anyone dream of challenging the wisdom of the protest made by Coriolanus in Shakespeare's play:

> "Custom calls me to't:
> What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
> The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
> And mountainous error be too highly heapt
> For truth to o'er-peer".

The root-principle has been admirably expressed by the Rev. J. S. Boys Smith, who, after urging that man has often proved greater than his theologies, adds:

" We may go further and say that the periodic reassertions of some fundamental element in human nature have frequently been the salvation of his theologies by bringing liberation from an abstract scheme that has ceased to interpret what he sees and survives only to limit his sight ".[1]

(6) No one would, of course, pretend that this task of sifting and revising the teachings of the past can be fulfilled without incurring the risk of fresh error. The question therefore is naturally asked, " How are we to be safeguarded against this risk? Surely, chaos and delusion will result if every man is to be allowed to believe exactly what he pleases ".[2] Hence recourse is had by some to a selection of well-established conclusions, and the acclamation of them as the final standard of orthodoxy from which no one may differ. The analogy of science suggests that this policy, however natural, is an error. In science the best defence of such conclusions as are true is to leave opinion entirely free, because ultimate authority resides, not in experts' conclusions, but in the objective facts which they endeavour to state. Truth being native to the human mind, and objective reality being always there for consultation, error in time corrects itself. Similarly in theology, Liberal Modernism would extend to every man

[1] In *Hibbert Journ.*, Jan. 1937, 211 f.
[2] G. K. A. Bell puts the question forcibly in *Mysterium Christi*, 279 f. His answer to it is much the same as mine (280–284).

the right to believe what he likes, *only in the sense in which that liberty is already taken for granted in science*. It does not mean for a moment that all opinions have an equal claim to be regarded as true, or that any man has a right to believe what is untrue simply because it suits his wishes, when it is within his power to learn the truth; it means that the final appeal lies, not to any established body of doctrine, however venerable, but to our records and experiences of God's dealings with us.[1] To argue that this is in principle insufficient reveals a strange scepticism. If, as we believe, God really exists and works through His Holy Spirit in the minds and consciences of men,[2] then, so long as man remains a truth-loving animal, our orthodoxy is secure, whatever errors may from time to time attend our efforts to reach it. There is, therefore, need for caution, reverence, sympathy, and patience, but none for intolerance or panic. Trust in God through Jesus Christ is the essence of Christian faith: it is also our sufficient protection against fatal error and our ground of reassurance against

[1] Cf. R. W. Dale, *Protestantism: its ultimate principle* (first printed in 1874), the first section. It is truly extraordinary that a man of Emil Brunner's intellectual calibre can allow himself to write such a sentence as this: "The thinking of the modern man, which began in a few minds at the Renaissance, and during the last two centuries has become the dominant mental attitude, is, as we saw, *the emancipation of reason from all authority outside of itself*" (*The Word and the World*, 113: italics mine).

[2] It is noteworthy that "Aquinas treats the whole subject of revelation without referring to the Spirit" (T. Rees, *The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience*, 176).

the dread of it, as we seek to tread the way to orthodoxy, or in other words the way to truth.[1]

I am grateful to be able to transcribe, in confirmation of my argument, some further words from the already-quoted article by the Rev. J. S. Boys Smith of Cambridge:

"This resolve, therefore, involves no denial of the transcendent, of the authoritative which is above all claims of expediency and self-interest; on the contrary it is the resolve to apprehend it, to be determined by nothing less, to be determined by it wholly and alone. To be guided by what ought to be, by the true and the good as these are actually apprehended, is a very different thing from being guided by personal preferences or aversions, even though it be true also that only by conformity to these standards can man ever gain his own fullest achievement or find his own peace. All other 'authorities' are either no authorities at all or secondary authorities dependent ultimately upon these. It is, of course, true that no man's sight can reach to the full range of all that these standards involve; he may thus, even in sincerity, more or less lose his way; and in any case there will always be more waiting to disclose itself to him. But the truth of fundamental importance is that only as man, and each individual man, uses his own mind and conscience can he see the true authority at all; for that authority is simply the witness of reality itself speaking directly to his soul. Only to the mind

[1] The theory of authority here outlined is stated a little more fully in my article on 'Authority in Religion' in *The Modern Churchman*, Dec. 1934, 509–522. Barth, of course, repudiates in toto any such doctrine of the Holy Spirit (*Credo*, 133–136).

so resolved can the ultimately authoritative, beyond which there is no appeal, speak at all; for it is in what the mind thus attends to that its voice is heard. To the eye of reason and the voice of conscience alone can the supreme reality disclose itself. To be guided by what is thus seen and heard is to be guided by that to which man may wholly devote himself, and by that to which alone a man may rightly submit himself at all. *Thus, to resolve to be directed by our own independent judgement and insight, and ultimately by nothing besides, stands in no sort of opposition to belief in the reality and sovereignty of God and of his revelation of himself to us; it is, on the contrary, the one indispensable condition of real appreciation of him and of acceptance of his rule.* . . . Does it then mean that man is left unaided in his world, without succour in his needs? No, it does not; provided it be also true that the reality he learns to know is a reality in whose eyes the achievement by each man of his own true destiny has supreme worth, a reality that succours him in the only way in which he can be succoured, by showing him the truth".[1]

It is, of course, not to be argued that, because man's mind is akin to truth, men will never believe what is false if they can possibly avoid it. The youthful Gladstone had this mistaken notion in view when he wrote: "Talk not of the power of truth; it does not subdue those who wilfully and habitually reject it".[2] Yet we may legitimately argue that what we cannot be sure of in the individual case, we can be sure of in the long run.

[1] In *Hibbert Journ.*, Jan. 1937, 209 f. (italics mine).
[2] *The State in its Relations with the Ch.*, ii. 362: cf. 369.

Truth exercises a certain coercive pressure on the mind of man;[1] and men generally will respond to Richard Hooker's appeal: "If truth do anywhere manifest itself, seek not to smother it with glozing delusion, acknowledge the greatness thereof, and think it your best victory, when the same doth prevail over you".[2]

Nor do I think it can be shown that the adoption of such views as I have advocated have been productive of harm to the Christian cause, apart from the consideration that every conceivable theory is liable to cause some particular harm if it be misused. But "abusus non tollit usum". On a long view I concur in the plea of the Montanist Tertullian that "it is fitting for Truth to laugh, because she is glad, to make fun of her rivals, because she is confident".[3]

[1] Cf. H. H. Farmer in *The Lord of Life*, 270–273.
[2] Tertull., *Adv. Valentin.*, 6. As Merrill says (*Essays*, etc., 22), "Why shudder at the emergence of truth, even if it does disturb comfortably settled and amiable prepossessions?"
[3] *Eccles. Polity*, Preface, 9.

CHAPTER 2

THREE BLIND-ALLEYS

CHRISTIANS who find Liberal Modernism unsatisfying diverge from it either to the left or to the right. To the left stand the non-Christocentric Humanists, to the right the Fundamentalists, the Barthians, and a large group which many would call "the Orthodox" but which (for reasons explained in the last chapter) I prefer to call—without prejudice or disrespect—the Traditionalists. Of these four groups I propose to pass over in silence the Fundamentalists, because, if I have any case to make out against the Traditionalists, it will cover a fortiori that of the Fundamentalists also. But something must be said of each of the remaining three.

I begin therefore with

the non-Christocentric Humanists.

Floating on the borders of Liberal Modernism is an ill-defined position occupied by those who, besides exercising to the full an intellectual censorship on traditionalist doctrine, assign to Jesus no

place of central importance or supremacy, withhold from him the name of "Lord", and acknowledge no special reverence for his Person. This position is exceedingly vague, negative, and hard to describe; and it would be still harder to point out the individuals who could rightly be said to hold it. Many of them cling to the name "Christian": and as a group they occupy all stages of approximation to and distance from the Christocentric position. They are not all professed Unitarians, though Unitarianism would clearly allow room for them all both individually and denominationally. "To be sure", writes Dr. D. W. Riddle of Chicago,

"one may perceive, accept, and act upon a current trend in philosophical reconstruction in theology. There is an evident lessening of emphasis upon Jesus in favor of a more popular interest in the attempt to understand the nature of God. Certainly Jesus has a lesser place in current theology than he had in the older theologies. In fact, it is possible to get along without Jesus as a basic theological value; Judaism, unitarian, and certain liberal theologies illustrate this. There are worthy religious formulations in which Jesus is not essential, either as a metaphysical value or as a sanction for an ethic".[1]

Such positions as this are not characteristic of any one country, although Germany and the United States are sometimes thought of as their special fields.

[1] *Journ. of Relig.*, Apl. 1937, 180 f.

Needless to say, most intelligent Christians will refuse to be satisfied with so amorphous and non-committal a position. "All doctrines of Christianity", writes Windelband, "however widely they may otherwise diverge . . ., are yet at one in seeking in (Jesus) and his appearance the *centre of the world's history* . . ."[1] And rightly so. Legitimate discontent with the traditional Christology is a very different thing from the reduction of Jesus to the level of a normal person devoid of any unique significance. The very word "Christian" surely implies the recognition of some sort of real religious supremacy in Jesus; and indeed it is impossible without such recognition to justify obedience to His teaching and example or to make any sense of the Gospels and the story of the Christian Church. Without wishing to deny the name of "Christian" to any person sincerely claiming it, I urge that a non-Christocentric humanism cannot but prove a blind-alley until it makes more explicit the implications of its moral acceptance of Jesus as the safest guide to life.

On the left flank of this purely humanistic Christianity there lies the realm of definitely non-Christian and even non-theistic humanism—a field thickly populated in these modern days of intellectual and religious unsettlement. Here again boundaries are hard to draw, and personalities often

[1] *Hist. of Philos.* (Eng. trans.), 256 (italics his).

hard to characterize, one position shading off imperceptibly into another over a very wide margin. But the main tenets of pure humanism are unmistakable; and for Christians it is even more untenable than the ambiguous neighbour on its right. We hardly need, therefore, to devote time to it at this point. Trust in God through Jesus and therewith the recognition of a genuine uniqueness in Jesus form the foundation of any position that can rightly be designated "Christian"; and the repudiation of this trust and recognition, whether avowed or only implicit, seems to involve some blindness to the historical and experiential data of the problem we are considering, and to raise questions which lie beyond the scope of our present study, in so far as they have not been answered by anticipation in the last chapter.

I therefore pass on to consider

Barthianism.

In doing so, I do not propose to linger over the alleged modifications made from time to time in Dr. Karl Barth's own position, or over the differences between him and Dr. Emil Brunner, as neither of these distinctions is essential for our purpose. I shall concern myself with the teachings of both men (who, of course, have a great deal in common), and with the utterances of other ex-

ponents of Barthianism generally, treating the movement they represent as, broadly speaking, a unity. Nor shall I bother about certain other and more striking characteristics of Barthian teaching, which despite their interest are incidental rather than essential to the system. The passionate style, for instance, of some of the writings in question is perhaps a personal trait of the individual authors, fostered—at least in Germany—by the severe strain of the post-War situation; the same may be said of the violently aggressive and dogmatic tone that is often adopted, though this is probably due in part also to the nature of the position to be defended.[1] Somewhat similarly the tendency to use startling and mystifying expressions[2] may be linked up with the avowedly paradoxical character of the whole system, which recalls Tertullian's

[1] Cf. M. Chaning-Pearce in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1934, 445 ("The Christianity which this theology envisages is therefore an all-militant faith, asking and making no terms with the enemies of God, seeing the world to be as full of 'false gods' . . . now as of old, the gods of religiosity, of man-centred humanism, of nationalism, of communism, of the new Islam . . . . It does not lack for foes and it will not treat with its foes"), 446; R. W. Stewart in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1934, 454 ("... incessant italics and jingling repetitions of catchwords that Barthians confuse with penetrating thought and arresting statement"). The perusal of the apologies for Barthianism certainly recalls the cry of the Schoolmen as represented by Seebohm—"*Our* Christianity or *none*" (*Oxford Reformers*, 51). Barth refers to "the synagogue of New-Protestantism, . . . which we must with heavy hearts *repudiate* as a false Church" (*Credo*, 147: italics his).

[2] Such as "shattering" (or "dislocating") "the framework of history", and again, "fulfilling the purpose of history". "All approximation signifies at the same time a growing distance" (so Brunner). J. A. Mackay remarks (in *Journ. of Relig.*, Jan. 1937, 6): "the moment Jesus is imitated by other men . . . he becomes their despair and so becomes the end of man and of mankind". Dehn (*Man and Revelation*, 59) makes the strange assertion that "Since Christ the history of the world has stood still".

fighting phrases : " it is absolutely credible, because it is absurd . . . it is certain, because it is impossible ".[1] " The object of faith ", says Brunner, " is something which is absurd to reason, i.e. paradox ; the hall-mark of logical inconsistency clings to all genuine pronouncements of faith ".[2] Yet we cannot rightly object to the element of paradox as such—each paradox needs to be judged on its own merits. Again, the extravagant claims made for Barthianism by some of its adherents ought not to prejudice us in regard to its intrinsic truth or falsehood. Barth himself is on all sides acclaimed as a prophet. According to the translator of his ' Credo ' (Mr. J. Strathearn McNab), he is " the Church's greatest living thinker ", who " in twenty years . . . has, in God's providence, changed the whole direction of the Church's thought. . . . He has brought the Church back to the Word of God ".[3] Reviewers in this country have on the whole been very kind to the Barthians. I wonder how many reviews I have read in the religious periodicals, commending Dr. So-and-So's defence of Barthianism or quasi-Barthianism as a forceful and suggestive treatise, which should give us furiously to think, and observing that, even though some may find his language obscure and be unable to agree with all his points, yet his position will undoubtedly

[1] Tertull., *De Carne Christi*, 5.
[2] Brunner, *Philos. of Relig.*, 55 (cf. 31, 96) ; *The Word and the World*, 6 f.
[3] Barth, *Credo*, vii f.

have to be reckoned with, and no one will be able to read his book without receiving great profit to his soul! It all errs a little on the fulsome side: but it would be as great a mistake to let the exaggeration of admirers sway our judgment in an adverse direction as to swallow such exaggeration uncritically. And finally, the admitted fact that Barthianism is a product of the needs and troubles of post-War Germany and a reaction against the over-facile humanism and optimism of earlier days is—for our immediate purpose—neither here nor there. It is equally easy on the one hand to argue that the circumstances of its origin constitute a recommendation of it, as demonstrating that it arose from fresh contact with the brutal realities of human sin, and on the other hand to set it aside as a "Krankheitserscheinung"—an aberration due to a temporary upset.[1] For my own part, I have no wish to do either. I desire to examine the Barthian position on its intrinsic merits and to base my judgment on them alone.

It will already be apparent from the title of this chapter that I do not regard the Barthian version of the relations between God and man as orthodox in the right sense of that word. But this opinion does not mean either that I fail to honour the personal courage, piety, and intellectual power of

[1] Professor Dehn, in the preface to his *Man and Revelation*, in greeting those who had listened to his lectures at Oxford, sadly remarks that "at times, they felt like gently shaking their heads".

its champions, or that I disagree with everything in their theological teaching. The name of Karl Barth will go down to history as that of a noble servant of God who has withstood the childish Nazification of the Christian Church in Germany; and many of his German followers and sympathizers have, as members of the "Confessional Church", been bravely suffering persecution for their opposition to Hitler's Church-policy. In regard to the Barthian theology, while I feel bound to regard it as on the whole a blind-alley, I agree with and treasure many of its positive affirmations, and am indebted to it for recalling me to phases of the truth which I had perhaps been prone to neglect and for generally stimulating my thought by its own pointed challenges. But let me now make it clear why I regard it on the whole as inadmissible.

The main concern of Barthian thinkers is to do full justice to the objectivity, transcendence, initiative, and sovereignty of God and the uniqueness of His revelation of Himself in Christ. That is a concern which ought to command the sympathy of every Christian, and which—I feel I may in justice add—no Liberal Modernist, in my sense of the term, has ever forgotten or wished to see put into the background.[1] But the Barthians attempt to

[1] See in particular an interesting article by C. S. Braden in *Journ. of Relig.*, Jan. 1937, 12–29, entitled 'How Liberal Christianity conceives of Salvation' (esp. 23, 25).

secure their aim by magnifying every distinction which these great verities suggest to our thought into an antithesis so absolute as to be false. The love of the clean-cut and of the " great gulf fixed " haunts them like a passion. Not content with making distinctions, they must needs insist throughout on " discontinuity ".[1] Man is in primis a sinner: as such, he cannot by searching find out God—for there is no way from man to God. He has indeed his reason, and with that he can learn and philosophize; he has even certain moral and spiritual powers, and with these he can be ethical and religious: but all this tells him nothing or next to nothing about the true God. Natural Theology is one thing, revelation through Christ something totally other; and the difference between them is fundamental. It is, indeed, at this point, that Brunner takes up a less extreme position than Barth, and acknowledges that man, in spite of his sin, retains in himself at least the ability to respond to God's call. Barth has passionately rejected these concessions as inconsistent with the doctrine of the supreme sovereignty of Divine grace.[2] The

[1] E.g. Brunner, *The Word and the World*, 48, 57, *Philos. of Relig.*, 130. Dr. F. L. Cross, writing in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1932, 473 f., remarks in another connexion that " for controversial purposes, a doctrine of degrees is of little use. The controversialist must have hard and sharp lines of division . . .". I suspect that this fact (for such I believe it to be) partly accounts for the Barthian stress on discontinuity.

[2] Cf. Dehn's severe words regarding Brunner's views (*Man and Revelation*, 34–37). When the University of Oxford conferred the honorary degree of D.D. on Brunner in July 1937, the Public Orator in presenting him said that in his books " cum vitiosam hominis naturam et Dei

Barthians have a truly surprising way of speaking about religion. For them, religion is what man thinks about God;[1] revelation is what God says to man—and the distinction between the two must be rigidly maintained.

Now it is quite possible to recognize the gravity of human sin, the objectivity of God's word, and the uniqueness of His revelation through Christ, without going to these extremes. It may be observed that Barthianism, like any other system which teaches the impotence and insignificance of man, intentionally or unintentionally gives itself in so doing a tactical advantage in controversy, as its opponent is willy-nilly manœuvred thereby into the unfortunate necessity of sounding at least a few diffident notes on his own trumpet. Be that as it may, I submit that it is untrue to our data to give sinfulness the first place when we are considering the relations between man and God. I

misericordiam in primis doceat, non tamen omnino, sicut alter, quocum prius est coniunctus, 'divini nescio cuius' expertes esse mortales credit neque Dei ipsius naturae funditus ignaros. De talibus controversiis iudicent theologi; nos virum eruditum et amabilem . . . honore quem tam bene meruit, ornemus. . . ." It was a *different* orator who in the March of the following year presented Karl Barth for the same degree: he said that Barth "Deum omnia transcendere didicit, homines nequiquam inter tenebras palari; nempe Verbum Dei Verbum Hominis negare et abrogare".

[1] Cf. Barth as quoted by J. A. Chapman, *Theol. of K. Barth*, 19 ("Jesus simply had nothing to do with religion"), and as quoted by S. Cave in *Congreg. Quart.*, Oct. 1933, 468 (God "protects Himself from every intimate companionship and from all the impertinence of religion"); Brunner, *The Word and the World*, 12, 18 (". . . the Word of God is something other than ethics, metaphysics, or religion, . . ."), 80 ("Christian faith is distinguished from all religion"), 97, *Philos. of Relig.*, 112 (". . . Hence religion is always also defiance of God. . . ."), 147.

find a different and I believe a truer view in the Synoptic Gospels. There, man is undoubtedly represented as a sinner; but the fact that he is so is not allowed to dominate and overshadow other and less gloomy facts. All is subsumed under the supreme gospel of the Fatherhood of God. Jesus encourages men to shape their views of God on the lines of human fatherhood at its best. Every son at some time stands to his father in the position of a sinner; his sinfulness is often a serious matter —sometimes it is tragic to the degree of causing a complete rupture in the fellowship between father and son: but normally that is not so. The son's normal position is that, not of a sinner, but of a beloved child and member of the family-circle; and when he sins, his sin is dealt with on that basis. So surely, Jesus would teach us, is our relationship to God. Jesus' great utterance that the Kingdom of God belonged to the childlike contradicts in my judgment any view of humanity which makes sin the *principal* item in the relation between man and God. To let sinfulness so fill the canvas is true neither to the teaching of Jesus, nor to our own knowledge of human experience. When we Liberal Modernists so plead, we are not making out—as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say—that sin is a small matter and of no great consequence.

The Barthian emphasis distorts, not only our

picture of human nature, but also our conception of God. True, the God Whom Jesus revealed is no mere indulgent parent: He is clothed in majesty and holiness. But nothing can remove from our Gospels the stress Jesus laid on His Fatherhood, as illustrated again and again by the instinctive benevolence of the human parent. This side of the truth seems almost wholly left out of sight in the Barthian view of the Divine character. If there is no way from man to God, why did Jesus bid men ask, seek, and knock, as the condition of receiving, finding, and having the door opened to them, and why did the Old-Testament prophets say in God's name, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you"?[1] Barthians, of course, do not deny in so many words that God loves man and that man is made in God's image; but all their stress is laid on the gulf between God and ourselves, on His hiddenness, His unknowableness, His otherness. They habitually deny that God is an object—apparently with a view to safeguarding His sovereignty, initiative, and self-revelation: but I confess I do not see the sense of refusing to designate as an object in the philosophic sense a being Who is real, Who is other than ourselves, and with Whom we come into relations. God, as the Barthians depict Him, does not act as if He truly loved men: and if He were as they depict

[1] Zech. i. 3; Mal. iii. 7: cf. 2 Chron. xv. 2; Lam. iii. 57; Jas. iv. 8.

Him, men would not feel much encouraged to love Him. As once in Calvinism, so now in Barthianism, God's majesty is exalted at the cost of His love, and appeal is made not to man's gratitude to God so much as to his fear of Him.

When these grave exaggerations as regards man and God are duly corrected, the weakness of the Barthian theory of revelation is clearly seen. No part of Barth's system is more strongly emphasized than the total dissimilarity between Natural Theology acquired through reason and experience on the one hand, and revelation received in faith on the other. Brunner and some other Barthians, unlike Barth himself, make small concessions regarding the value of Natural Theology; but for all practical purposes no such value is acknowledged, the possibility of it having been destroyed by sin. Impelled by that thirst for complete objectivity which has so often misled the theological mind, the Barthian allows as small a place as possible to the subjective side of man's contact with God. Belief in the competence of reason, the immanence of God, God's presence in Nature, and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in man's mind and conscience, is acknowledged: but the outstanding features of the system remain, despite all explanations, inconsistent with the acknowledgment. The true God is held to reveal Himself not only supremely and uniquely, but solely, in Christ.

Such a contention is inconsistent with the concessions which Barthians themselves make to a wider view, as well as with the facts of religious experience, as we know them, for instance, through the Book of Psalms and through what Tertullian aptly called " the witness of the soul which is by nature Christian ". Moreover, the Barthian system is itself expounded and defended by processes of reasoning: and if reason is itself untrustworthy, what are we to say of the system commended on the strength of it? After all, God has given us reason, and we do not honour Him by denying its value.[1]

The exaggerated dualism of the Barthians' teaching on this point shows itself in one of their favourite antitheses, that, namely, between what man thinks about God and what God says to man. When we remember that every word of God to us must at

[1] The great phrase, " O testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae ! ", occurs in Tertullian, *Apologet.*, 17. The idea of it is accepted and well expounded by Headlam (*Life . . . of Jes. the Christ*, 239: " . . . Christianity could not appeal to us as true unless it harmonized with, even if it transcended, human experience . . ."), but naturally repudiated, with explicit reference to Tertullian's words, by Dehn, who regards it as a typical error of Roman Catholicism (*Man and Revel.*, 28), and as inconsistent with the Biblical psychology (*op. cit.*, 11 f., 19). The late Prof. J. Arundel Chapman, though sympathetic to Barthianism, wrote: " We need a view which sees not an absolute contrast between revelation elsewhere and revelation in Christ as that between the non-existent and the existent, but a progressive view which sees behind the long upward striving of man (as it appears on the human side) a revelation of God, manifest in the nobler elements of Hinduism and Taoism, and passing to its absolute forms in the prophets of Israel, and reaching that absolute in Jesus Christ. We cannot forget the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, nor can we believe that God's thoughts were confined only to Israel. Much of what I am contending for is admitted by Brunner. . . ." (*The Theol. of Karl Barth*, 41). I doubt however if Brunner is as sympathetic to this view as Chapman supposed. Dehn cuts the Gordian knot by declaring that the author of Ps. ciii. 3 " consoles himself in the grace of God in Jesus Christ " (*Man and Revel.*, 52).

some stage take the form of a true thought of ours about God, the perversity of the antithesis becomes patent. We may, we are told, *test* the Word of God, but we may not *judge* it. But how is the testing to be done, except by relying on experience and reason; and where is the Modernist who, when once satisfied by such tests that God's real Word is before him, presumes to judge it? Dr. Brunner writes:

". . . to believe means to let oneself be addressed by God, to acknowledge without reserve God's authority, God's Word that comes from outside ourselves. Faith means bowing under this authority. No authority, no faith. It is not I who say it is true, but I believe it because God says it . . . *if we ask: . . . how do we know that God says so? the answer is: Because this objective Word of God is corroborated subjectively; just as certainly, just as subjectively, as anything which I know for certain — This is what is meant by the phrase: the Word of the Holy Spirit within me, the assurance of faith. . . .*" [1]

Could it be more plainly stated that the doctrine of the Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit, which Barth and his followers readily admit, introduces that very element of subjective sifting and criticism (exercised on what is presented as God's Word), which they are elsewhere so eager to discredit?

This acknowledgment that it is a part of our duty to test what purports to be God's Word with a view to discovering whether it is really so or not

[1] *The Word and the World*, 66 f. (italics mine).

reveals a glaring inconsistency in the Barthian position regarding the authority of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition. The admission that the Word of God is *not co-extensive* with Scripture, and the frank acceptance of Biblical Higher Criticism, are consistent with the doctrine of the Inner Witness of the Spirit, but are not consistent with the repeated Barthian declaration that the Scriptures are the supreme authority for Christian belief.[1] And if even the Scriptures are thus admitted, however implicitly or unwillingly or inconsistently, not to be the really *final* standard for Christian belief, what are we to say of the frequent appeal to the Creeds and Confessions and general tradition of the Church, in particular the teaching of the Reformers, as the great standards by which the erring judgment of the modern Christian needs continually to be overruled and corrected?[2]

[1] Cf. Barth, *Credo*, 7, 175, 177, 178, 180, 183 (". . . The norm that determines our choice is Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture is . . . the criterion of our study of the Church's past. . . . So a choice is actually made, certainly not a choice according to my individual taste, but according to my knowledge of Holy Scripture"), 186, 192, 199; Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 180–185, 186 (". . . We are not masters of Scripture but its servants . . . we are called simply to pass on to the listener what Scripture says. . . . We should approach a Bible text without any presuppositions and allow it to inspire us with a theme . . ."), 187; Brunner, *Philos. of Relig.*, 22 (the Scriptures described as "the ground and norm of faith", "our abiding standard of reference"), 28, 32, 115 (". . . the primary standard of revelation"), 150 f. (". . . We do not measure God's word in Scripture by the standard of reason: we measure reason and indeed all knowledge by God's word in Scripture"), 151–156, 175, 179 f. (". . . the Bible . . . becomes the standard and source of Christian knowledge").

[2] Cf., for example, Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 7 (". . . I have endeavoured to deal with certain questions of Christian thought and life, not as a free scholar but as a theologian bound by the Church. . . ."), 8

There are other grave weaknesses in Barthianism. There is the attempt to distinguish theology sharply from philosophy, as if philosophy could do its work properly without taking the truths of religion into account—and along with this attempt the plea that knowledge of God is not part of one's " world-view ", as if God were outside of reality altogether. There is the adoption of the Calvinistic doctrine of Divine election, which admirably safeguards the sovereignty of God, but does so at the cost of implicitly ascribing to Him an arbitrary favouritism and of reducing man from a person to a robot or marionnette and thus cutting the nerve of his moral responsibility. There is the comparative indifference to the historical facts of Jesus' life on earth (despite the stress laid on the *historical* character of his revelation), for fear lest we detract from his significance as the atoning and Risen Christ, the Word of God to man.[1] There is, finally, the depreciation of social service, of hope in human progress, and in particular of pacifism, lest, through endeavouring to obey our Lord's example and teaching, we lapse into legalism, presumption, and " work-righteousness " (which last, according to Barth, is the unpardonable sin). I do not

(" God's revelation . . . finds confirmation in the Confessions of our Church "), 181, 184 (" . . . Theology is always ecclesiastical theology; otherwise it has no right to exist "); Barth, *Credo*, 7 f. (dogmatics " is itself confession-bound. . . ."), 180–182. Brunner appeals repeatedly to the Reformers as a quasi-final authority (e.g. *Philos. of Relig.*, 26–29, 151, 178, etc.).

[1] See below, pp. 126 f.

propose to discuss any of these aberrations more fully here. But I have said enough to show why I regard the Barthian theology, despite the truth of many of its positive affirmations, and despite even the need for new stress on them, as on the whole unacceptable. It is not only paradoxical, but self-contradictory; it is needlessly dualistic, and bristles with false antitheses; it displays strong tendencies to obscurantism. If these criticisms are well-grounded, then Barthianism cannot show us the way through to orthodoxy.

"*Traditionalism*"

is the best single word I can think of to designate the third and last of those alternatives to Liberal Modernism which I propose to discuss. As I explained above, I use the term without prejudice, and simply as a synonym for what is popularly known as "orthodoxy". Having however already defined "orthodoxy" as the relevant truth, I cannot consistently use the term as if it could be defined otherwise.

What I mean by "traditionalism" is the view that, over and above personal self-commitment to God through Christ, essential Christianity requires the acceptance of a certain *definable minimum* of doctrines, failure to accept any one of which calls for the surrender of the claim to be a Christian. The

particular minimum in mind varies widely with different Christian groups. The Roman Catholic, for instance, is pledged to believe all that the Roman hierarchy tells him that the Church requires. The Anglican is bound to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and in a looser way to the Thirty-Nine Articles: but the disciplinary treatment of those who dissent from these is more lax than is the case with Rome. Some, particularly advocates of Reunion, would like to rally round the Nicene Creed as the standard for all Christendom. Others plead more vaguely for "the Creeds and Confessions" as a whole: others for "the Faith" witnessed to and safeguarded by some or all of these Creeds and Confessions: and yet others for a small selection of specially central doctrines. Finally, as a variant on this last, some would plead for a brief narrative summary of the redemptive work of God through Christ. But however the essential minimum be delimited, it is acclaimed as essential or fundamental, because it is held to represent the central, classical, and universal faith of Christendom. As such it is regarded as final, in the sense that there is no appeal beyond it; and no man should call himself a "Christian" unless he can accept it in its entirety.

Certain forms of this position show a close resemblance to the prevalent neo-Thomism, with its insistence on the clean-cut between reason and

revelation. Similarly, there are points of contact between it and Barthianism—in the general loyalty to the authority of " the Church ". I have already given my grounds for rejecting the Thomist antithesis between reason and revelation, and also for disagreeing with the Barthians. But traditionalism is not necessarily either Barthian or neo-Thomist: and it has therefore to be considered on its own merits.

It is not to be wondered at that traditionalism in some form appeals strongly to large numbers of modern Christians. The apparent objectivity of its standards gives it great attractiveness, especially in these days, when there is a general sense of confusion and uncertainty in theology as elsewhere. And I do not for a moment contend that that impression of solidity is a complete illusion; on the contrary I believe it is to a large extent justified by the inherent truth of many of the particular doctrines embraced in it, especially if liberty of interpretation be allowed. And I wish to make it clear that in reckoning traditionalism among the blind-alleys, I am not discussing the truth or otherwise of any specific traditional doctrine. I shall have some criticisms to offer in my next chapter on certain forms of the traditional doctrine of the Person of Christ: but that is a special instance; and even if I were not offering these criticisms, my case against traditionalism as a position would

still stand. I object to it, not primarily because one or other of its component doctrines seems to me untrue, but because the attempt to draw a hard and fast line around *any* group of doctrines large or small, so that all within is essential, and all without optional, appears to me to be inherently unsound as a method of determining the way to orthodoxy. I agree very strongly with the judgment expressed many years ago by the present Bishop of Derby, when he wrote:

"The view which I wish to repudiate is the view that there exists a kind of core or nucleus of Christian teaching, formulated and stereotyped for all time in terms so finally adequate as to constitute a series of doctrinal propositions which must be simply taken or simply left, and which are exempt from rational criticism, in a sense in which ordinary Christian teaching is not so exempt. . . ." [1]

It was a sad day for Christian theological clarity when St. Jude allowed himself to write the phrase "the faith once (for all) delivered to the saints".[2] This apparent use of the word "faith" to designate correct Christian beliefs diverges widely from the practice of the Synoptic Evangelists and of St. Paul, who reserve it for personal trust in God or Christ.[3]

[1] A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Authority and Freedom* (1924), 189. [2] Jude 3.
[3] See above, pp. 5–8. The two meanings are seen overlapping in the mainly non-Pauline "Pastoral Epistles", which often give the word the same sense as Jude does: see e.g. 1 Tim. i. 19, iv. 1, v. 8, vi. 10, 21, 2 Tim. ii. 18, iii. 8, Tit. i. 13, ii. 2. Cf. also Jude 20. The notion of a fixed "depositum fidei" rests presumably on 1 Tim. vi. 20: "Guard that which is committed (to thee)", where the margin of the R.V. has "Gr. *the deposit*", and the Vulgate "depositum".

It is quite true that faith in this Synoptic or Pauline sense inevitably and immediately produces some elements of doctrine, and that doctrine and personal faith interact. Moreover, it is to be remembered, as illustrating the intimate relation between them, that, so far as New-Testament Greek is concerned, "to have faith" and "to believe" are designated by one and the same term. Nevertheless, the broad distinction between faith as religious, personal self-commitment to the God revealed in Christ on the one hand, and faith as the acceptance of doctrines based thereon on the other, is sufficiently clear and is widely recognized; and it would be well if, in this connexion, we could, despite the precedent set by St. Jude and the author of the Pastorals (as they are usually understood), reserve the word "faith" for the former.

The pertinence of this distinction becomes clear when the claim is advanced to "re-state the Christian Faith". To this demand the warning reply is often made [1] that we must have a care lest, in restating the faith, we unintentionally abandon it. But the warning presupposes that there existed from the first beginnings of the Church, over and above "faith" in the Synoptic and Pauline sense, a definable group of essential doctrines or a single defined doctrinal version, the acceptance of which,

[1] As, for example, by Dr. T. W. Manson in *Congreg. Quart.*, Apl. 1935, 153 f.

as original and authoritative, was a permanent condition of the Christian profession. That indeed is the traditionalist position: and I must now proceed to state why I regard it as erroneous, and why as a Liberal Modernist I plead rather for trust in the guidance of the Spirit and in the "anima naturaliter Christiana" as *the only true safeguards* against our possible loss of any Christian essentials.

(1) The complete objectivity supposed to be afforded by traditionalism is an illusion. No one —not even the Roman Church—teaches that *all* doctrines believed by Christians in the past are essential to Christianity today. A selection has therefore to be made. Such selection, of course, involves trust in the accuracy of the selectors, that is, in the subjective powers of certain groups of Christians. The very variety of forms taken by traditionalism reveals the subjective character of the basis on which it necessarily rests.

"The notion that the apostles themselves compiled a quintessence of Christian doctrine was widely current; but the greatest difference of opinion prevailed as to what the quintessence consisted of".[1]

Why, for instance, should we be tied down to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and not to the Chalcedonian, why to the Chalcedonian and not to the Athanasian, why to the Athanasian and not to the

[1] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion* (Eng. trans.), i. 95 n.: he is speaking of the period round about A.D. 200.

Tridentine, why to the formulated Creeds and not to the other unformulated but universally-held beliefs of Christian people? To fix on any one selection as necessarily final is therefore arbitrary; and the claim to authority on the score of objectivity must in consequence be disallowed.[1] "The theologian . . .", writes a reviewer of Dr. Brunner's book, 'The Mediator',

"will need a more adequate explanation of why these (central Christian) doctrines are held by Professor Brunner. The Zurich teacher cannot say it is because the Church teaches them. If he says it is because the Bible teaches them, he must give a further explanation why he believes in the Bible and must meet the objections of the critics fairly and squarely. If he says the doctrines carry their own conviction, their subjective appeal is admitted".[2]

I laboured in my first chapter to show that in theology, as in science, no external authority (not even therefore the consensus fidelium) can ever possess that infallibility which alone would constitute it the really final court of appeal. If this be so, traditionalism, in setting up such a final court of appeal in the form of a group of doctrines, is necessarily in error.

[1] Cf. R. Whately (Archbp. of Dublin), *The Kingdom of Christ* (1842), 148 n.: "By 'ancient' some persons understand what belongs to the first *three* centuries of the Christian era; some, the first four; some, seven; so arbitrary and uncertain is the standard by which some would persuade us to try questions, on which they, at the same time, teach us to believe our Christian Faith and Christian Hope are staked!"

[2] *Times Lit. Supplt.*, 30th Aug. 1934, 584.

(2) The foregoing a priori objection to traditionalism is confirmed a posteriori by our knowledge of the limitations under which all Creed-makers have had to do their work. In insisting on this point, I am not conscious of transgressing the rule which I laid down for myself in the previous chapter, namely, that in doctrine we are dependent on the teaching of those better informed than ourselves, and that the Christian Fathers are therefore entitled to our genuine respect. But respect that wilfully ignores obvious facts is not genuine: and it *is* an obvious fact that the Creed-makers of the fourth and fifth centuries, notwithstanding their zeal, their intellectual distinction, and the Christian character of most of them, did not possess the equipment enabling them to establish finally-authoritative pronouncements regarding essential Christian doctrines. Their metaphysic was inadequate, ignoring as it did (in common with most ancient epistemologies) the personal factor in experience and the consequent presence of a relative element in all human formulations. In spite of the fact that there were not lacking individuals amongst them with some critical sense, their historical knowledge was on the whole very defective. The fifth century was

"a time when there was no such thing in existence as historical criticism, in any proper sense of that term. . . . The Church . . . felt only a mild and mainly

æsthetic curiosity about purely historical questions. It had not come to see that they might be of any vital importance. It accepted freely and amiably a vast mass of imaginative historical inventions, without caring to investigate their source, . . ." [1]

History formed a very large part of the Church's material; and it is absurd to pretend that a defective knowledge of it in no way impaired the validity of her conclusions.

These considerations affect, not only the fourth and fifth centuries, but all periods of the Church's life.

"Why need we suppose that the Church was preserved so absolutely free from error in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds? Are there not doctrines contained in these Creeds which are frequently a *σκάνδαλον* to those who are required to assent to them? May not their assertions too be approximations towards Truth, towards that Truth which is too rich ever to find expression in any one formula? That they are magnificent compositions will hardly be denied. . . . May not the Creeds be allowed that latitude of interpretation which we usually accord to devotional pieces?" [2]

In the Preface to the 'Institutes', Calvin very aptly says, with reference to the Fathers: "Those holy men were ignorant of many things: often they are at issue with one another; sometimes even they contend against themselves". The question is sometimes confidently asked, Can we

[1] Merrill, *Essays in Early Christ. Hist.*, 270. Cf. G. Kittel in *Mysterium Christi*, 40.

[2] F. L. Cross (of Pusey House) in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1932, 478 f.

know better what the Gospel means than the great saints and doctors from the first to the nineteenth century? The answer is that in certain respects we assuredly can. We understand the true meaning of the Old-Testament authors better than did even the Apostles Paul and John, the historical realities of our Lord's life on earth better than Athanasius, the fate of the unbaptized better than Augustine, the nature of the Atonement better than Anselm, the freedom of the human will better than Luther, the all-embracing love of God better than Calvin, the Second Advent better than Wesley, and the interpretation of the Scriptures better than Spurgeon.

"If religion is to find itself in the new world, it must learn to breathe and feel and speak freely in an environment entirely different from that of the classical theologies of the past".[1]

(3) The unsoundness of traditionalism as a method is seen perhaps most clearly in the abandonment by the traditionalists themselves, from time to time in the past, of certain doctrines which were held for many centuries by all or virtually all Christians, and which, although perhaps not embodied in any official creed, were current as integral, i.e. essential, items of Christian belief.

[1] So J. M. Creed in *Mysterium Christi*, 139: cf. W. A. Curtis in Hastings' *Encyc. of Relig. and Ethics*, vii (1914) 263 f., and A. E. Garvie in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1937, 363 (the modern view of the Bible "affords an intellectual emancipation in that we are delivered from bondage to the ancient creeds as now antiquated formulations of the permanent faith of the Church . . .").

"The Gospel . . . contains something which, under differing historical forms, is of permanent validity . . . one metamorphosis followed upon another. From the beginning it was a question of getting rid of formulas, correcting expectations, altering ways of feeling, and this is a process to which there is no end. . . ." [1]

The most signal of these abandoned beliefs is that in the inerrancy of Scripture—which was accepted by Christendom with practical unanimity from the second century to the nineteenth. A partial exception to this statement is to be seen in the liberty assumed by certain of the sixteenth-century Reformers, and in particular in the slap-dash expressions of Luther. In expounding the doctrine of justification by faith, Luther assumed a very free attitude to Scripture; but he had no consistent view, and his followers on the whole stood by plenary inspiration. Calvin as a scholar admitted the existence of small inaccuracies, and allowed himself here and there considerable freedom in critical exposition: but on the whole he too ranks as a supporter of belief in Biblical inerrancy. Brunner makes a great deal of what he considers the freedom of "the Reformers" from bondage to this belief: but it is impossible to credit them with any consistent freedom from it, or with anything at all resembling the critical attitude approved by the modern Barthian. The fact that belief in Biblical inerrancy was not incorporated in any

[1] Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (Eng. trans.), 13 f.

formal creed was due, not to any doubt as to its being an essential item of belief, but to the fact that no one challenged it. The view held by the late Dr. Gore and some other Catholics that Catholicism (in the broad sense) was not committed to belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, but that this belief was introduced by Protestants at the Reformation—a view based on the fact that no Church-Council had authoritatively declared the belief obligatory—has been exposed as quite erroneous.[1] Such serious difficulties as the belief raised were dealt with, for the most part, not by denying Biblical accuracy, but by liberty of interpretation. The coming of the Higher Criticism has abolished that particular belief for all traditionalists (including Barthians[2]), other than Roman Catholics and Fundamentalists.

Now had you presented the most moderate and best-assured findings of modern criticism to Aquinas or even to Calvin, he would certainly have cried out that this was tantamount to dissolving the foundations of the faith: in fact, when criticism first came to be known and discussed, that is exactly the sort of thing most Christians did say about it. It is humiliating for us all, not excluding those of conservative views, to recall the deposition and excommunication of J. W. Colenso when, as

[1] By Dr. J. V. Bartlet in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1932, 460–462. The same error reappears in *Times Lit. Supplt.*, 14th Nov. 1936, 916.

[2] Yet see the extraordinarily confusing and unsatisfying explanations of Karl Barth on the matter of historical exegesis (*Credo*, 186–191).

Bishop of Natal, he had published books advocating views on the Pentateuch of a kind that (though Pusey called it "heathenism") everyone now accepts without turning a hair—or the dismissal of that great scholar, William Robertson Smith, from his professorship at Aberdeen for a similar reason. Such instances, of course, could be indefinitely multiplied, were all the facts fully known. It was very much the same when the first steps were taken in the sixteenth century towards a more exact study of what Scripture really did teach. When Erasmus criticized the text of the Latin Vulgate as faulty, he was attacked in terms that strangely recall more recent controversy. "It is not likely", Martin van Dorp wrote to him,

"that the whole Church has gone wrong for so many centuries, in having always used and in now both approving and using this (Vulgate) edition. Nor is it probable that so many holy fathers, so many most eminent men, who in reliance on it settled most difficult matters in the General Councils, defended and expounded the faith, and issued Canons to which even kings lowered their sceptres, were in error. . . ." [1]

Yet despite the passionate opposition with which the Higher Criticism was greeted, on the ground of its inconsistency with the truth of the Bible as the Word of God, behold us now, one and all cheerfully admitting that belief in its inerrancy is no part of the Christian essentials. I refrain from

[1] *Erasmi Epistolae* (ed. Allen), ii. 14 (no. 304: about Sept. 1514).

labouring the significance of this truly extraordinary turn-over: but quite clearly it places the traditionalist method of determining orthodoxy in a very unfavourable light.

Moreover, the inerrancy of Scripture is by no means the only case of this kind. Along with the discovery that belief in it is not essential to Christianity has come the discovery that the same is true of other long-cherished beliefs, which in the past would certainly have been claimed as essential. Notwithstanding the weight of tradition behind these beliefs, they have now been widely abandoned, and that simply because "modern minds" became convinced that they were incredible.

In regard to the existence of a personal devil, for example, the late Dr. Nathan Söderblom wrote: "God be thanked that, in Sabatier's words, 'ink has been more effective than holy-water against him'—and against the grisly terror which the belief in the devil has cast over men's minds".[1] The devil is indeed still sometimes mentioned as a kind of symbol of evil; and it is interesting to note that in post-War religious writing, especially in Germany, serious belief in the real activities of Satan himself and the demons has revived: but it is extremely doubtful whether, among Protestants generally, any serious attempt will be made to revive belief in him as an actually existing person.

[1] In *Jesus or Christ?* (*The Hibbert Journ. Suppl.* for 1909), 150.

Another instance is the visible Second-Coming of Christ at the end of the world, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. I cannot help thinking that Dr. C. H. Dodd has exaggerated the extent to which, in the Primitive Church, the expectation of an early return of Jesus was found to be "not itself the substance of the Gospel, but a form under which the absolute value of the Gospel facts is asserted", and was therefore abandoned by the "finer minds" who substituted a more adequate expression of the substantive truths of the Gospel.[1] I presume he has the Fourth Evangelist in mind: but it is a question how far even that writer really abandoned the belief in a Parousia as a future event in time; and in any case he was not followed by other thinkers (except possibly Origen, who was later condemned as a heretic). The Second-Coming, the Last Judgment, and the eternal punishment of the wicked fastened themselves on the Christian mind as integral parts of the whole Christian scheme of things. How firm the belief was, as late as the eighteenth century, is seen in Cowper's lines, in his poem entitled 'Retirement' (about 1782?):

> "Is there, as reason, conscience, Scripture say,
> Cause to provide for a great future day,
> When, earth's assign'd duration at an end,
> Man shall be summon'd, and the dead attend?

[1] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, etc., 91–93.

> The trumpet—will it sound? the curtain rise?
> And show the august tribunal of the skies,
> Where no prevarication shall avail,
> Where eloquence and artifice shall fail,
> The pride of arrogant distinctions fall,
> And conscience and our conduct judge us all?"

It is indeed impossible to disprove eternal punishment from Scripture, as Farrar virtually tried to do in 'Eternal Hope'. Being well supported in Scripture, the traditional eschatology still occasionally finds serious advocates. The late Bishop Welldon in 1921 referred to the coming-again of Jesus "in the clouds of Heaven to judge all the living and the dead" as an indispensable item of the Church's faith.[1] The modern Barthians also seem to favour the old terminology.[2] Yet for the most part modern traditionalists have really abandoned these once well-established items of Christian belief, notwithstanding the fact that they usually plead for and labour to provide some serious equivalent.

Analogous liberties have been taken with Church-doctrine, as distinct from Scripture. Dr. Maurice Relton, for instance, who gives such a high place to Patristic authority, does not hesitate to express a certain sympathy with Patripassianism

[1] In *Contemp. Rev.*, Nov. 1921, 625.

[2] Cf. Barth, *Credo*, 166 ("the resurrection of the flesh"), 166 f. ("the Second Coming of *Jesus Christ*"), 171 (Christ as Judge, and the possibility of man "being eternally lost"), 125 (God "hurls into eternal torment"); Dehn, *Man and Revelation*, 58 f. ("The Day of Judgment . . .").

and Apollinarianism [1]—both of which the early Church emphatically condemned. Nine hundred years of supremacy did not prevent the theory that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil from being summarily dismissed on purely rational grounds by Anselm; and the eight hundred years of supremacy enjoyed by Anselm's own view have not prevented modern traditionalists from rejecting it also.[2]

While, however, it is quite clear that the views of Christian men as to what doctrines are essential to Christianity has varied very considerably down the ages, it must not be inferred that all the changes have been of the negative order, eliminating one previously-held belief after another. Along with the elimination of the untenable has gone the steady acquisition of the assured—alike in the historical, the ethical, and the spiritual departments of Christian thinking.

It will naturally occur to some to concede willingly all I have urged against traditionalism, so far as formulated doctrines are concerned, but to point out that my arguments do not touch the inner core of the Christian Faith. With that view,

[1] Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 12–19, 57 f., 146 f., 226 f., 269: cf. C. E. Raven, *Apollinarianism*, 185, and S. H. Scott, *Anglo-Catholicism and Reunion*, 30 (he speaks of Dr. Relton's "hark-back to a quasi-Apollinarianism"), 30 f. n. 2. Not, of course, that Dr. Relton would admit that he was an Apollinarian *in the usual sense of that word* (*A Study in Christology*, 90–93).

[2] Franks, *The Atonement*, 15.

I need hardly say, I entirely concur; nay, I go further and acknowledge the truth and importance of many of the formulated doctrines. The real question is as to whether we are competent to lay it down for one another how much beyond simple faith in God through Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is an essential part of this kernel. That all who profess such faith will need to some extent to explicate it doctrinally is true: but they will necessarily vary in the versions they can give; and no one version, however welcome and needful to some, can rightly be acclaimed as equally essential for others.

"Freedom of thought is to religion as the very breath of life, and there is no surer way of killing the religious impulse than by forcing it into intellectual channels that are not of its own making. In an age of rapid change and deep unrest like the present, it is perhaps natural that men should seek to safeguard the Christian faith by identifying it with certain dogmas and making them binding upon all and sundry. Yet if there is one thing that the history of the Church seems to teach it is that this method has been tried and found wanting. It is no barrier against unbelief, it puts a premium on hypocrisy and conveys to the world outside an utterly false impression of the Christian faith. We shall never find our deposit simply in a form of sound words.

"When however we seek to maintain that it is in a certain type of Christian experience that we must look for the real kernel of Christianity, we are conscious of entering on a very difficult quest. Of recent years that

theology of experience which was once hailed as the last word of wisdom has undergone a very marked eclipse. It is criticized as being too subjective, as tending to turn religion into mysticism and to deprive it both of a standard and of authority. Such criticism is justified in so far as experience has been interpreted as mere feeling. But so far as Christian experience is concerned such an interpretation is neither right nor necessary. It is with the content of experience that we are here concerned, and the content of Christian experience is not merely the acknowledgment of God in Christ but the personal acceptance of His saving grace and power ".[1]

Traditionalists sometimes allow themselves to speak a little contemptuously of those for whom the essence of Christianity consists of belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, as these are set forth both explicitly and implicitly in the teaching of Jesus. But have they considered how much is covered by such a belief, if only it be taken seriously? It would be well for them to remember what a very central place was given to it by our Lord himself, and how he told the scribe who regarded love to God and love to man as the two greatest commandments that he was " not far from the Kingdom of God " (Mk. xii. 34). Must not then he who through trust in Jesus is set on loving God and his fellows be very near the centre of things, however simple his theology?

[1] W. B. Selbie in an art. entitled ' Guard the Deposit ', printed first in *The Christian World* for 26th Nov. 1936, and then in *Faith and Fact*, 94–99.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

INTEGRAL to the Christian religion is the centrality of Jesus Christ. Without his historic life and ministry there would have been no Christian Church. Christians call themselves by his name because they are to a man conscious of owing their faith in God and their beliefs about God to him. It is indeed possible to overstate the priority of the question of his Person, as, for instance, when it is pleaded that his teaching can be of no interest to us until we know who he was that gave it—as if his words had of themselves no enthralling power. Still, I agree that a desire to follow him involves logically the quest for an adequate theory of his Person. Hence the importance of Christology in the building-up of Christian doctrine, and the urgency of the question whether on Liberal Modernist lines a satisfying Christology is possible.[1]

[1] I take this opportunity of entering a mild protest against the customary and repeated misuse of the words of the Gospel, in the inaccurate rendering of the Authorized Version, "What think ye of Christ?", whenever a Christological discussion is in mind, and a good heading or title for it is required. The sentence, of course, means, not what the innocent reader is led to suppose, namely, "What think ye of Jesus of Nazareth?", but "What think ye concerning the Jewish Messiah?" I am sorry to see that the two editors of *Mysterium Christi* in their Preface have fallen into the popular error, and have aggravated the misdeed by solemnly adding the reference—"(Mt. xxii. 42)".

The Church was first committed to a corporate declaration on the relationship of Christ to God when at Nicæa in A.D. 325 it was laid down that Jesus Christ was " the Son of God, only-begotten from the Father, that is, from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made; co-essential with the Father; by means of whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth; who for the sake of us men and our salvation came down, and was made flesh, became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, went up into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead ". Many of the Eastern Bishops were unwilling to accept the technical phrases " from the essence " and " co-essential "; but after nearly sixty years of controversy virtually all agreed to treat the Nicene statement as binding, especially as it had by then become allowable to describe Christ as being of a different " hypostasis " from the Father though of the same " essence ", despite the fact that at Nicæa the two terms had been treated as synonymous.

The decision thus taken and confirmed raised acutely the problem as to how in the one Christ, Deity and humanity were related: and it fell to a learned supporter of the Nicene formula—Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicæa in Syria—to make the first serious attempt at an answer. Accepting the current view that man consisted of body, animal

soul, and reasonable soul or spirit or mind, he suggested that in our Lord the body and the animal soul were truly human, but that the place of the reasonable soul or the spirit or mind (i.e. the real seat of human personality) was taken by the pre-existent Divine Logos. This view, however, was rightly felt to be tantamount to a denial of his real humanity, and was rejected in A.D. 381 at the Council of Constantinople, where the Nicene statement was reaffirmed.[1]

It took another seventy years before the question was settled to the satisfaction of the majority. All agreed that in Christ there were two Natures, Divine and human, and only one Person; but whereas the Alexandrian school laid such stress on the unity of the Person as to imperil the duality of the Natures, the Antiochene school laid such stress on the duality of the Natures as to imperil the unity of the Person. The latter error—in the form given to it by Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople—was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431: but when twenty years later the opposite heresy—that of Eutyches (who held that there was only one nature in Christ)—was dealt with at the Council of Chalcedon, a Formula was sanctioned which has since served as the authoritative statement of the traditional doctrine.

[1] See, on the views of Apollinarius, the valuable work of C. E. Raven, *Apollinarianism*, esp. ch. v (177–232).

The Formula of Chalcedon expressed belief in " one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Deity and the same perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, co-essential with the Father as regards his Deity, and the same co-essential with us as regards his humanity, in all things like unto us, except for sin; begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his Deity, but in the last days—for the sake of us and our salvation—the same (Christ born) of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer, as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged (to exist) in two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being by no means cancelled through the unity, but rather the speciality of each Nature being preserved, and converging into One Person and One Hypostasis; not divided or severed into two Persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ. . . ."

The Formula of Chalcedon remains to this day the standard of orthodoxy for the Eastern Christians, for the Roman communion, and for large numbers of traditionally-minded Protestants, both Anglican and other (including the Barthians). In the centuries immediately following Chalcedon, it was decided, after much controversy, that there must

have been two Wills, as there were two Natures, in Christ. Apart from this, no further doctrinal elaboration of any consequence took place in Western Christendom; but in the East an important supplementary theory was evolved by Leontius of Byzantium in the sixth century. His object was to meet the patent objection that the Chalcedonian Formula represented the humanity of Christ as impersonal. This was indeed an exceedingly difficult conception: yet if there was in Christ only "one Person and one Hypostasis", and if that Person or Hypostasis was Divine, it followed inevitably that the human nature in Christ must be impersonal, i.e. that he was not a human person at all, but a divine person possessing and employing an impersonal human nature. It is indeed sometimes urged that the Chalcedonian Fathers did not mean by *πρόσωπον* and *ὑπόστασις* what we mean by the word "Person". Doubtless our modern ideas of "personality" have given special shades of meaning to the word "Person" as we use it: but it is sufficiently equivalent to the corresponding Greek words to allow us for the present purpose to regard them as synonymous. Modern traditionalist theologians therefore do not hesitate to insist today on the impersonality of Christ's human nature. In order to meet the difficulty of this conception, Leontius suggested that we should regard Christ's human nature neither as "hypo-

static" (i.e. personal on its own account), nor as "anhypostatic" (i.e. completely impersonal), but as "enhypostatic": by this he meant that Christ's humanity was personal only *in* the Divine Logos, which from within itself endowed the Saviour's human nature with personality. This solution was accepted as satisfactory in the East, and was taken over by John of Damascus, who in the eighth century systematized for all time the theology of Eastern Christendom, somewhat in the same way that Thomas Aquinas later summed up the thought of the Roman West.

Notwithstanding the weight of authority behind it, and the apparent inevitability of the process of argument that led up to it, the Chalcedonian doctrine has in more recent times been very widely abandoned. Even Melanchthon was discontented with it. As implying the impersonal character of Christ's humanity, it has been repudiated by Congregational scholars like Drs. Forsyth, Selbie, Robert Mackintosh, Vernon Bartlet, and R. S. Franks, Presbyterians like the late Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, Baptists like Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson, and even Anglicans like Drs. J. M. Creed, C. E. Raven, and Wm. Temple (though the last-named has more recently modified his strictures upon it).[1] It has

[1] In *Foundations* (1913) Dr. Temple wrote: "The formula of Chalcedon is, in fact, a confession of the bankruptcy of Greek Patristic Theology" (230). In *Christus Veritas* (1924), 134, he somewhat qualifies this statement by observing: "It is not really the formula, but the history of the whole controversy, that leaves the impression of bank-

on the other hand been stoutly defended by Drs. Chas. Gore, H. M. Relton, J. K. Mozley, and Canon O. C. Quick. I want now to state the reasons why I regard it as a definitely untenable theory of our Lord's Person.

(1) It lies open to the same objection as proved fatal to Apollinarianism, namely, that it is tantamount to a denial of our Lord's real humanity. The two systems indeed are not *verbally* the same, and there is in the Chalcedonian Formula no *explicit* denial of Christ's full humanity. But the Formula certainly does *imply* that the humanity of Jesus was impersonal; and the implication has been insisted on by numerous Romanist and Anglican authors with very great emphasis. Now if you allow Jesus only an impersonal humanity, your insistence against Apollinarius that he possessed a genuine human spirit or mind or reasonable soul does not really compensate for the loss. "If Apollinarius was justly condemned", writes Dr. Raven, "Athanasius and Cyril and Dr Bright should be condemned with him".[1] Nor is the compensation offered in the theory of Enhypostasia, as broached by Leontius of Byzantium, and defended in recent times by Dr. H. M. Relton, at all adequate. By recognizing, as Dr. Relton urges

ruptcy. The formula did exactly what an authoritative formula ought to do: it stated the fact". It did not, that is, attempt the impossible task of *explanation*.

[1] C. E. Raven, *Apollinarianism*, 232.

us to do, that there is a human element in God, in Whom alone personality—always imperfect in man—is perfect, we do not make more intelligible or conceivable to our minds the notion of a being who is possessed of a human nature, including a human mind, spirit, or reasonable soul, but who is not a human person in any sense which those words will legitimately bear.[1]

Yet the Gospels make it unmistakably clear that, whoever or whatever Jesus was, he was a human person. The point is so obvious that it needs no arguing. Nor is it only the Gospels which so represent him. If he were not a human person, how could Peter describe him as "a man accredited by God" (Acts ii. 22), and as one whom "God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts x. 38), Paul as "the man whom He has appointed" (Acts xvii. 31), and the author of the 'Epistle to the Hebrews' as one "made in all things like unto his brethren" (Hebs. ii. 17)? The charge of having to all intents and purposes reduced the humanity of Jesus to a dead letter, while always and with the best intentions acknowledging it in words, lies heavy at the door of the

[1] For answers to Relton's advocacy of Leontius' theory of Enhypostasia, see D. Miall Edwards in *The Lord of Life*, 201 f., J. M. Creed in *Mysterium Christi*, 132, and A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 119 f., 124–126. For Relton's sympathy with Apollinarianism, see above, pp. 69 f. A great deal of the modern traditionalist belief about Jesus is virtually Apollinarian: cf. Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 54, 100; Bartlet in *The Lord of Life*, 174 n.; A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 115 f. ("... very commonly Christians who are not theologians think of him as not being human at all except in body ...").

traditional Christology; and writers—even including some of traditionalist views—have regretfully acknowledged the justice of the accusation.

The late Dr. Harnack wrote:

"The whole doctrine is inadmissible, because it has scarcely any connexion with the Jesus Christ of the Gospel, and its formulas do not fit him; it is, therefore, not founded in truth".[1]

Dr. Schweitzer observes:

"When at Chalcedon the West overcame the East, its doctrine . . . cut off the last possibility of a return to the historical Jesus. . . . This dogma had first to be shattered before men could once more go out in quest of the historical Jesus, before they could even grasp the thought of His existence. That the historic Jesus is something different from the Jesus Christ of the doctrine of the Two Natures seems to us now self-evident. . . ."[2]

"The complete or partial denial of Christ's humanity", writes another missionary, Mr. Campbell N. Moody,

"was to the ancients a most alluring error; it was almost disastrous to the course of Early Christian Thought; and the Church was not very successful in its long warfare against the many-headed monster".[3]

Even Dr. H. M. Relton acknowledges that "the price of victory which orthodoxy had to pay for the downfall of Arianism was a weakening of the

[1] *What is Christianity?* (Eng. trans.), 235.
[2] *Quest of the Hist. Jesus*, 3 f.
[3] *The Mind of the Early Converts* (1920), 63.

Church's grasp upon the truly human character of the Word made flesh". "Cyril", he says,

"secures the unity of Christ's Person at the expense of His humanity, in this sense, that he scarcely does full justice to the Antiochene endeavour to secure for the human factor a relative independence".[1]

The position is truly stated by Dr. D. Miall Edwards:

"Both the theology and the piety of the Church allowed Christ's humanity to recede into the background. *Formally*, His true and full humanity was always an emphatic element in the creed, at least from Chalcedon onwards; but *practically* it tended more and more to become a dead letter. . . ."[2]

This judgment is confirmed by the late Professor F. C. Burkitt, who writes:

"What came out least impressive in these age-long disputes was the human character of Jesus. It was asserted. It was even an article of Christian dogma, but it was little felt. . . ."[3]

It is hardly possible to deny the justice of the indictment; and the Chalcedonian Fathers, as the crystallizers of the traditional doctrine, must take their fair share of the responsibility for the damage that was done.

(2) The attempt is sometimes made to meet the force of the protest against this quasi-suppression

[1] *A Study in Christol.*, 6, 62. [2] In *The Lord of Life*, 209.
[3] *Jesus Christ, an Historical Outline* (1932), 81. Cf. C. Anderson Scott, *Romanism and the Gospel*, 71 ("... a Church for which the human nature of Jesus was a dogma but not a reality, ..."), 82.

of our Lord's humanity by the argument that in his earthly life he claimed to be God and was recognized by sympathetic contemporaries as being God. Thus Dr. R. C. Moberly (as a contributor to 'Lux Mundi') wrote:

"As a matter of fact, the whole Church of Christ in history (*including the men who had been His own companions, trained and inspired by Himself,*) taught and believed, without shadow of hesitation, that He was very God. Very gradually, indeed, had they advanced to this; . . . these witnesses . . . testify unhesitatingly . . . that *His life and death were penetrated by the consciousness of His own Godhead*; . . ."[1]

Many Protestants so argue: and Roman Catholics, needless to say, constantly press the same plea. Father Ronald Knox, for instance, says that Jesus "believed himself to be God", and finds confirmation of this assertion concerning Jesus in an unexpected place:

"his Agony in the garden of Gethsemani shows once more the intention to parade (you might almost say) his human weakness. He insisted upon having witnesses at hand . . . when he knew that he was going to 'break down'. I have never been able to make any sense of these two stories (the Temptation and the Agony), except on the assumption that our Lord meant to say, 'See, I am Man, although I am God'—and in

[1] *Lux Mundi* (ed. 1891), 173 (italics mine). A correspondent in *The Christian World* for 7th Jan. 1937 so far forgot himself as to speak of "the Lord's claim to be the Father". Doubtless this was only a layman's slip; but it indicates the extraordinary inaccuracy to which an uncritical trust in tradition may lead.

issuing that caution, it is clear that, *ex hypothesi*, he admits the fact of his own Divinity ".[1]

But this is a very definite historical error. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus make any claim to be God. The idea to the contrary rests on certain passages in the Fourth Gospel, which admittedly gives us a late interpretation, and not a simple record of the ipsissima verba spoken by or to Jesus. Even so, there are (apart from a disputed reading in the Prologue)[2] only two passages that can be adduced for the purpose—one the sudden and emotional confession uttered by the imperfect believer, Thomas, after the Resurrection, " My Lord and my God " (xx. 28), and the other Jesus' own claim, " I and the Father are one " (neuter, ἕν : x. 30), a claim which he himself immediately explains by asking : " Say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ' Thou blasphemest ', because I said, ' I am *Son of* God ' ? " (x. 36). How is it possible to maintain that one who repeatedly spoke to men about God in the third person, calling Him sometimes " Your Father " and sometimes " My Father " (see, e.g., Jn. xx. 17), was himself deliberately claiming to be God ?[3]

[1] R. A. Knox, *Belief of Caths.*, 104 ff. Cf. A. S. Lunn in *Is Christianity True ?*, 33 (" the only theory which fits all the facts is the theory that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God . . . ").

[2] On John i. 18, see below, p. 100 n. 1.

[3] Cf. Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 78 f., 82 f. (neither Jesus' mother, nor Peter, had any idea that Jesus was a divine Person) ; cf. 47 (disciples knew him as a man) ; D. Miall Edwards in *The Lord of Life*, 211 f.

(3) How is it possible to think of a being, fashioned after the pattern described in the Chalcedonian Formula, as having had any real personal religion of his own, as having suffered real temptation, as having offered up real prayers to God, and as having stood in need of the help of the Holy Spirit? Yet the Gospels tell us that all these conditions were true in the case of Jesus. Their incongruity with the traditional doctrine of his Person is so patent that, as we might expect, the historical evidence has been partly ignored, partly perverted, in order to avoid the difficulty. Thus, Thomas Aquinas taught that the prayers of Jesus were intended merely for didactic and exemplary purposes for the benefit of us men. What are we to say of a doctrine which necessitates such a conclusion as that? [1]

(4) The Gospels make it abundantly plain that

[1] Cf. Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 51 f., 68–70 (Jesus' temptations real), 71 ("The *spiritual* life of our Lord was human": his prayers and guidance by the Spirit), 75 (recorded facts about him—temptation, prayer, etc.—must be admitted), 292 f. (yet Dale declines to choose between Jesus' "posse non peccare" and "non posse peccare"); Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 301 f. (Jesus could not sin, but was not aware that he could not!); J. V. Bartlet in *The Lord of Life*, 126 (Jesus' relations to God those proper to *man*), 135 (this similarity "soon fades from the Church's Christology as a whole"), 140 ("they do not seem to have dwelt enough on His 'filial consciousness' . . ."), 153 f. (Jesus' recorded need of the indwelling and grace of the Holy Spirit inconsistent, not only with Apollinarianism, but with "all ordinary Greek Logos orthodoxy"), 154 f. (his temptations real), 162 n. (Aquinas on Jesus' prayers), 175 (on the traditional view, "not only must He have prayed to Himself as God, but . . ."); D. Miall Edwards in *The Lord of Life*, 212; T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 101 ("We are so accustomed, and rightly, to make Jesus the object of religion that we become apt to forget that in our earliest records he is portrayed not as the object of religion but as a religious man").

Jesus during his earthly life was subject to all the normal limitations, physical and intellectual, which are incidental to human life as we know it. In particular they leave us in no doubt as to the limitations—in certain respects—of his knowledge. Mark repeatedly represents him as asking questions of those about him; and it is highly unnatural not to understand at least the great majority of these questions as real requests for information which he did not possess. This is conspicuously the case with his question to the woman with the issue, whom (in view of her natural terror—Mk. v. 33) he would hardly have pressed for an open confession had he known her circumstances. That the two later Synoptists understood the questions recorded by Mark as genuine requests for information is shown by the fact that they *omit* several of them, clearly because they did not wish to exhibit human limitation in Jesus—in the same way as they tend to omit Marcan references to his emotions.[1] Luke (ii. 52) tells us that in his youth Jesus "advanced in wisdom and stature", and the author of 'Hebrews' (v. 8) that "he learned obedience from the things he suffered". Not only so, but Mark (xiii. 32) reports him as explicitly stating that he did not know the day or hour of his future coming.[2] Now this explicit admission

[1] See the evidence set out in G. W. Wade, *New Test. Hist.*, 176 f.

[2] There is some textual ground for believing that the Matthæan parallel (Mt. xxiv. 36) omitted the words οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, thus obliterating

of ignorance on our Lord's part, coupled with a great mass of other less-pointed but really quite clear indications that his knowledge was in certain respects limited, has always been a very grave problem for those who felt bound to interpret his Divinity in Chalcedonian terms. A solution has been sought by many in the doctrine of " kenosis " or self-emptying, adopted by some eminent German and English theologians (notably the late Dr. Gore), but now somewhat less in favour. The theory is based on Paul's statement in Philippians ii. 7 that Jesus " emptied himself ", and is to the effect that in the Incarnation he laid aside the physical or metaphysical attributes of Deity (omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.), and retained only the religious and ethical. This Kenotic Theory has the merit of leaving us free to interpret the Gospel-evidence in a straightforward way: but it is entirely unacceptable to the Eastern Church, which, under the guidance of Cyril of Alexandria, the Chalcedonian Fathers, and John of Damascus, and in opposition to the Antiochene School, has always refused to admit any limitations whatever

Jesus' reference to his own ignorance. Such an obliteration would be in keeping with much that we observe in 'Matthew'. On the other hand, it is possible that 'Matthew' retained the words (several good MSS. have them), and that they were omitted through motives of reverence by some later scribe, the variation in our MSS. being thus accounted for. That they were not similarly omitted by any copyist of Mark would on that view be due to this Gospel being less in use than 'Matthew' (see McNeile's note ad loc.). In any case there can be no doubt that Jesus used the words; otherwise no one would have ever dared to ascribe them to him. Luke omits the sentence.

in Jesus' intellectual knowledge. So inconsistent with orthodoxy was all such limitation felt to be, that the plain statements of the Gospels that Jesus increased in wisdom and that he did not know the day of his coming were explained away by Cyril and John of Damascus in an entirely forced and unnatural manner, our Lord's partial ignorance and progress in wisdom being declared to be merely apparent and exhibitive. John of Damascus wrote that whoever taught that Jesus really did advance in knowledge was practically a Nestorian. In this matter the Eastern Church was followed by the Western: already in the fourth century Hilary interpreted Jesus' disclaimer of knowledge as "a Divine economy of silence". Anselm writes: "The Lord is said to have advanced in wisdom and favour with God, not because it was so, but because he so behaved (sic se habebat) as if it were so".[1] Thomas Aquinas also laid it down that there was absolutely no ignorance of any kind in Jesus; and the notion of a limited knowledge in him was forbidden to Catholics by a decree of the Holy Office in June 1918. The same view is taken by certain modern Anglicans.[2] Could the

[1] *Cur Deus Homo?*, i. 9; cf. 10 (on learning obedience).

[2] The evidence on this question is conveniently and impartially collected in Dr. S. H. Scott's little book, *Anglo-Catholicism and Reunion* (1923); see especially 15–24, 37, for the Easterns (chiefly Cyril); 33–37, 45, for the Romans; 26–29, 37 f., for the Anglicans. A most interesting by-product of the controversy is that such stalwarts of Anglican traditionalism as the late Dr. Gore, the late Dr. Charles Harris (a veritable "malleus modernistarum"), the late Dr. Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar,

weakness of the Chalcedonian Formula be more clearly displayed than by the necessity to which its stoutest champions feel put to play fast and loose with the explicit evidence of the Gospels, and their unabashed willingness to do so?[1]

(5) A last objection to Chalcedon is the consideration that a Christ whose being is describable as Chalcedon describes it must have lived his life and mastered his temptations (whatever they were) in a way so totally abnormal as compared with human standards, that any salvation he effects for us would be of an entirely non-ethical character, since he can be in no real sense an example to us.

and Drs. Maurice Relton and Wm. Temple, who all in one way or another recognized some intellectual limitations in Jesus, would on that account—Dr. Scott thinks—be reckoned by the theologians of the Eastern Church as unsound in the Faith! (Scott, 25, 29–32, 41 f., 44). And the same would, of course, necessarily be the view of the Roman Church also.

[1] On the general question of the limitations in Jesus' knowledge, see the literature quoted by McNeile in his note to Mt. xxiv. 36. Dale insisted that such limitations were real (*Christian Doctrine*, 59–65, 75, 286–292). I have discussed the problem in my *Catholicism and Christianity*, 212–218: cf. also the debate between the Rev. A. D. Martin and myself in *Congreg. Quart.* Jan. 1930 (16–22) and Apl. 1930 (250–253, 255 f.). Dr. Relton, while appreciating the Antiochene insistence that Jesus' humanity must be taken seriously (*A Study in Christology*, 21, 62), and willing to recognize its limitations (231, 234, 244, 246 f.), is very dubious about the Kenotic Theory (213, 221 f.), and prefers to believe that Jesus was capable of "transcending these limitations at will" (234), and that when he did so he possessed the supernatural consciousness proper to Divinity (233, 253). The most recent discussion of the topic is that by Rev. Norman Hook of Knutsford, in *Expos. Times*, Sept. 1937, 540–542. He is anxious to avoid "the heresy of Apollinaris" (542 b), but seems to me dangerously near falling into it, when he writes (541 a): "Now the personality of Christ is likewise (i.e. like other human beings) a complex of body, mind, and spirit, but the spirit which 'emerged' in Him was the Eternal Logos . . .", and he goes on to approve in general terms the "Enhypostasia" advocated by Leontius of Byzantium. He follows Dr. Gore in trying to find a principle for delimiting the spheres in which Jesus may have been subject to human ignorance from those in which he could not have been so (541 b).

To argue thus is not to fall into the fallacy of saying, "We should like to think thus-and-thus about Christ: therefore we shall be accurate in so thinking"; for it is a matter of experience that he *has* actually been the Saviour of men in the moral sense of the word, and that his example is in point of fact, what Lecky calls it, "an enduring principle of regeneration". No theory of his Person, then, can be acceptable which makes such moral regeneration unintelligible, or which fails to give a fundamental place to the moral majesty of his personal character as a man, and to connect it directly with his Divinity.

I would not of course deny that the creed-making process culminating in Chalcedon had great value of a positive kind. It conserved the central Christian doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus, the conviction that the Divinity which men saw in him was as truly Divine as that of the Creator Himself. I do not indeed feel quite so sure about another merit often claimed for Chalcedon, namely, that it refrained from attempting to solve the problem, and confined itself rather to setting or defining it, by laying down the limits and conditions within which it would have to be solved. I gravely doubt whether the Chalcedonian Fathers would have acknowledged such an account of their work as accurate, or felt complimented by the suggestion of it. But let that pass. The gravamen of our

objection to their Formula is that, instead of synthetizing the historical data, it defies them, and in doing so rules itself out as inadmissible. Canon R. C. Moberly wrote in *Lux Mundi* (1889) the following candid words: "Councils, we admit, and Creeds, cannot go behind, but must wholly rest upon the history of our Lord Jesus Christ".[1] The soundness of this principle is obvious, has often been recognized,[2] and needs no arguing. Yet on four or five distinct issues we have found the Formula of Chalcedon to be inconsistent with our records of Jesus' life. What, in face of this fact, are we to make of the plea so often advanced by traditionalists, that if you accept the authority of the Gospels, you implicitly commit yourself to the Creeds of the Church? That indeed is the trump-card used on behalf of the Formula by modern scholars who, finding it desperately hard to square it with the Gospel-portrait, prefer to rely on the plea that it is essential to orthodoxy, and follows inevitably from Nicæa as Nicæa followed inevitably from the New Testament and from the experience of the faithful. This inevitability however is by no means certain. It would not, for instance, be admitted for a moment by any of those distinguished modern theologians whom I

[1] *Lux Mundi* (ed. 1891), 177.

[2] Cf., e.g., Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, 108, 144; Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 54 f. ("... Our theory must be governed by the facts; ...."); Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 107.

have already mentioned as rejecting Chalcedon.[1] A brief survey of the Christology of the Ante-Nicene days will show how far to all appearance this Christology was from any general pronouncement or even implication of the doctrine laid down in A.D. 451.

We must not make the mistake of supposing that our materials for Christological study are exhausted by the four Gospels, and such other scraps of historical information concerning Jesus' earthly life as lie outside them. The religious and moral experiences which his early followers associated with their memories and records of him, and with their belief in his living presence, are indispensable, if indirect, evidence of what manner of man he was. If it is a mistake to accept uncritically every devotional utterance as a reliable piece of historical or theological truth, it is equally a mistake to ignore the light which such utterances throw on the Christological problem.

The early evidence reveals the general conviction on the part of Christian people, that Jesus was, for all who would accept him, the means whereby they had been brought into new and life-giving contact with God, such as gave them an unshakable faith in Him, a hitherto unknown power over sin, an imperturbable peace amid all life's alarms, and

[1] Cf. *Mysterium Christi*, 132, 144.

a firm and serene hope of eternal life beyond the grave. Upon him who had wrought this salvation for them, they heaped titles of honour—" Christ ", " Lord ", " Son of God ", " Saviour ". So strong was their sense of nearness to God in being near to him that ere long Divine attributes and then the Divine Name were assigned to him. The stories of his life and the devotions of the Church depict him as Divine in a unique and metaphysical sense, one whose earthly presence was numinous, and who in his exalted life governs and protects his Church. Prayer is not only offered to God in his name, but at times actually addressed to him, and he becomes an object of religious worship.[1] Alongside of all this, however, there is no general forgetfulness of his real humanity, no general identification of him with God, and (despite much argument) no general agreement as to his precise relation to God.

A closer inspection of Christian thought as it developed will not only confirm what has just been said, but should make us cautious of overemphasizing any one aspect of early Christian devotion, any one title or term used in connexion with it, or any one venture of Christian speculation, as if it gave us a final and objective solution of the

[1] For early Christian prayer to Christ, see Bartlet in *The Lord of Life*, 130 f.: also Jungmann's *Die Stellung Christi im liturgischen Gebet*, reviewed by Dom Connolly in *Journ. of Theol. Stud.*, Oct. 1926, 82 f. It appears that the general liturgical custom of directly addressing *public* prayers to Christ did not really begin until the end of the fourth century.

mystery of our Saviour's Person. As Professor R. H. Lightfoot has recently reminded us, " There is no one unchanging explanation of the person of Jesus in the books of the New Testament ".[1] The very variety and at times the inconsistency of such particular pieces of testimony are a warning against putting greater weight on them than they can bear.

The early Christians took over Jesus' own designation of himself as Messiah, and as in a special sense " the Son " of God. The Messianic category was soon seen to be inadequate, especially for Gentile Christians; and the Church settled down to the custom of speaking of him as " the Lord ". As the *Aramaic* language of the formula quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians xvi. 22 shows, this designation of Jesus was not confined to the Gentile Christians. The Gospel of Mark (about A.D. 67) well represents this early stage of thought, and portrays the figure of the human Jesus in superhuman colours and proportions. Against the old Liberal view that Mark, in contrast with his successors, shows Jesus as a simple and normal human teacher of morals, recent scholarship has rightly protested. It must, however, be observed that Mark on the one hand depicts the human emotions and other limitations of Jesus with a

[1] *Hist. and Interpret. in the Gospels*, 216; cf. G. Kittel in *Mysterium Christi*, 40.

frankness which his successors thought it irreverent to copy, yet on the other hand already introduces into the story several Nature-miracles of a kind unknown to the earlier Gospel-documents, Q (which furnished the matter common to 'Matthew' and Luke, but not drawn from Mark) and L (the matter peculiar to Luke), and actually duplicates one of them—the crowd-feeding.[1]

Paul's Christology has been so thoroughly studied and is so well known that it needs no full description here. He knows and treasures the ethical ideal embodied in Jesus' life on earth. He thinks of him as the pre-existent Man from Heaven, the Second Adam, the now ubiquitous and mystically-apprehended Christ: he applies to him as "the Lord" Old-Testament passages in which this title occurs as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name for the Supreme Deity, Yahweh.[2] It has also been rightly pointed out that, in the

[1] On the evidence for the Nature-miracles, see below, pp. 131–134. I do not doubt that Mark had a high Christology and regarded Jesus as Son of God: but I think it is a mistake for theologians to keep appealing for evidence of this to his opening verse: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God". (So, e.g., Hoskyns and Davey, *The Riddle of the N.T.*, 95, 115–118; Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, 105 f., 117). To begin with, it is on textual grounds doubtful whether the words "Son of God" are a part of Mark's original text: but even if they are, there is much to be said for the view proposed by W. A. Craigie in *Expositor*, Oct. 1922, 303–305, that the whole verse is really a scribal heading to an old copy of the Gospel, Mark's original opening having (like the original termination of the book) been lost. It is almost impossible to fit verse 1 into the syntax of the next verses; and if it *were* a scribal heading, the variant reading would be more easily accounted for.

[2] E.g., 1 Cor. i. 31, Rom. x. 12 f. For a philosophical justification of Paul for thus connecting Jesus directly with the centre of cosmic reality, see H. T. Andrews in *The Lord of Life*, 110.

absence of any trace of dissension between Paul and his Christian contemporaries on the subject of the Person of Christ, we must infer that his views tallied in the main with those of the Church at large. At the same time, it has to be remembered that Paul never loses sight of the distinction between Christ and God—nay more, of the subordination of Christ to God (1 Cor. xv. 28). An eminent modern theologian told me recently that he believed Athanasius would have condemned the Pauline Christology for Subordinationism, had it been presented to him as the work of a contemporary. It is doubtful whether Paul ever actually uses the word "God" as a designation of Jesus. The one doubtful case is Romans ix. 5. The fact that there is no other instance makes it probable that here we should either (1) put a full stop after *σάρκα* (thus making the reference to God a detached doxology), or possibly (2) correct *ὁ ὤν* to *ὢν ὁ* (thus making the clause more or less parallel to its predecessors—"whose is the God Who is over all", etc.). A clearer case is Titus ii. 13; but this is probably not from Paul's hand. Paul is the first Christian whom we know to have definitely ascribed pre-existence to Christ; but it is impossible for us to be sure that the ascription rested on actual knowledge imparted to the Apostle by supernatural inspiration, or that it is anything more than an inference drawn by his reverent

imagination. The idea is absent from the words of Jesus recorded in the Synoptics and from the first mission-preaching. The late Dr. B. H. Streeter recently pointed out that Paul's friend Luke does not mention the pre-existence of Christ.[1]

The author of 'Hebrews' is still sufficiently in touch with history to be able to speak of Jesus' "strong crying and tears", and of his "learning obedience from the things he suffered" (v. 7 f.): at the same time he gives him throughout a uniquely exalted place as the only-begotten Son, far above angels, and calls him "a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek".

Moving along a different line of thought, the Gospels of Luke (in its present form) and 'Matthew' advance beyond the Marcan representation of Jesus' life in various ways. They carry back his special Divine endowment from the descent of the Spirit at his baptism to his miraculous birth from a Virgin. This I hold to be a departure from historical accuracy, arising in the first place from a misinterpretation of Isaiah vii. 14 in the Septuagint version.[2] In the Gospel of 'Matthew' in particular there are numerous indications of a willingness to abandon detailed historical fact (as accessible in Mark) for the sake of heightening the glory of Jesus and in other ways serving the interests of

[1] In *Camb. Ancient Hist.*, xi. 283. See also below, p. 134.
[2] See further below, pp. 128–130.

Christian edification. Thus, 'Matthew' doubles the madman whom Jesus cured in the land of the Gerasenes (viii. 28 ff.: contrast Mk. v. 1 ff. = Lk. viii. 26 ff.); he doubles—if not quadruples—blind Bartimæus (ix. 27–31, xx. 29 ff.: contrast Mk. x. 46 ff. = Lk. xviii. 35 ff.); and in order to exhibit Jesus as exactly fulfilling the poetical prophecy of Zech. ix. 9, he represents him as riding into Jerusalem on two asses at once (xxi. 1–8, especially 7: contrast Mk. xi. 1–8 = Lk. xix. 28–36 = John xii. 12–18). He changes Jesus' question to the Ruler, "Why callest thou me good?" (Mk. x. 18 = Lk. xviii. 19), into, "Why askest thou me about goodness?" (Mt. xix. 17). He changes Mark's statement (vi. 5) that at Nazareth Jesus "*could not* do there *any* deed of power" into the remark that "he *did not* do there *many* deeds of power" (Mt. xiii. 58). The fig-tree, which Mark represents as found withered the day after Jesus had cursed it (xi. 12 ff., 20), 'Matthew' (xxi. 19 f.) describes as withering up "immediately". Many other features in his Gospel might be pointed out, less striking perhaps than these, but all revealing the same desire—a desire, namely, to portray Jesus as raised above the limitations of normal humanity, and with this end in view a willingness to improve gratuitously on the statements taken from his sources. The evidence is abundant, and its tendency is quite unmistakable: and it is therefore

the more extraordinary that some scholars should persist in denying that such a tendency existed. I cannot, for instance, understand how Dr. A. C. Headlam can write of this evangelist: "there is no evidence for any dogmatic purpose, deliberate or even unconscious, in the alterations that he makes".[1] A more recent refusal to acknowledge any "heightening of the Christology" in 'Matthew' is that of the late Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and Mr. Noel Davey, in 'The Riddle of the New Testament'.[2] Their main point is that 'Matthew' and Luke simplify certain of the roughnesses and obscurities of Mark and lay greater stress on Jesus' *teaching* than he does: but I do not see how, in view of the evidence just adduced, it is possible to deny that there is some "heightening of the Christology" in 'Matthew's' Gospel. Luke, besides not mentioning Christ's pre-existence, does not seem to have regarded his death as a sacrifice. Though differing from Paul in this, he was in agreement with large numbers of the early disciples. His Christology was as elementary as his soteriology, for in 'Acts' he represents Peter and others as frankly speaking of Jesus in simple human terms.[3]

With the Johannine Gospel and First Epistle a new stage is reached. Here the attempt is made

[1] *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ* (1923), 29.
[2] See 111 f., 122–144, 159–161, 164.
[3] E.g., Acts ii. 22, iii. 13, 26, iv. 27, 30, x. 38, xvii. 31, etc. Cf. Streeter in *Camb. Ancient Hist.*, xi. 282 f.

to bring the whole of the Christian facts under a single philosophical principle. Jesus is proclaimed as the Divine Logos or Word, which was with God from all eternity, "became flesh" in the life of the human Jesus, and dwelt among men in order to impart to them eternal life. It is from the phrase in John i. 14, "the Word became (or was made) flesh", that is derived the term "Incarnation", which fills so large a place in Christological teaching and discussion. The Logos is called "God" adjectivally (Jn. i. 1); but apart from the dubious verse i. 18, the substantive "God" is applied only twice to Jesus, both times—as I have shown—with qualifications.[1]

The great Christian conviction that through Christ believers were in vital contact with God Himself was thus given a solid basis in a thought-out view of reality as a whole. Not unnaturally, therefore, the Johannine idea of "Incarnation" has by many been regarded as the necessary centre of any tenable Christology; and the assumption has been made that it possesses an unmistakable and authoritative finality around which our think-

[1] See above, p. 84. In John i. 18 a widely-supported reading has *μονογενὴς θεός* as a designation of Christ. But (1) the alternative reading, *μονογενὴς υἱός*, has very considerable external evidence in its favour, and (2) is further supported by the fact that, strictly speaking, *μονογενὴς* means "sole" or "unique", not "only-*begotten*", which would be *μονογέννητος* (a fact which renders the combination *μονογενὴς θεός* improbable), and (3) by the unlikelihood that any scribe would substitute *υἱὸς* for *θεός*, if *θεὸς* were original. The absence of the article would suggest that the word *θεὸς*, if it *is* the true reading, is here used, as in verse 1, adjectivally: see Moffatt's translation.

ing may rally, and by which all fresh speculation can readily be tested. It is well, however, to remember that, valuable as the doctrine is for the reason just named, it really furnishes no finality. It gives more formal theological expression to the Pauline conviction that " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself " ; but it does not materially add to our knowledge of the nature and manner of his presence. As Dr. W. R. Matthews says, " the Christian Gospel is not that there has been an Incarnation, but that we may see God ' in the face of Jesus Christ ' ".[1] Still less does the doctrine settle, as it is often supposed to do, the pressing question as to how far our own metaphysical relation, as Jesus' followers, to God resembles that of Jesus himself to God. The common assumption that it gravely negatives any such resemblance needs qualification. Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is " the only Son " (Jn. iii. 16, 18 ; cf. i. 14, 18 : 1 Jn. iv. 9) : he is from above, from the bosom of the Father ; he speaks of the things he learned from the Father. But when he says, " Ye are from below ; I am from above " (Jn. viii. 23), he is apparently addressing his critics and enemies, whose father is the devil (viii. 44). Christians, on the contrary, are repeatedly spoken of as having been themselves begotten of God (cf. Jn. i. 12 f., iii. 3, 6, xi. 52 ; 1 Jn. ii. 29, iii. 9,

[1] In the composite volume, *The Future of Christianity* (1927), 111.

iv. 7, v. 1, 4, 18). Whatever distinction there be, therefore, between the Saviour and the saved, it is not—according to the Johannine view—that *he* is begotten of God while *they* are not.

A further point is that difficulty arises when we try to harmonize the Johannine theology, not only with certain earlier Christological views, but even with certain features in the actual history of Jesus himself. 'John' does indeed refer to the descent of the Spirit at baptism (i. 32–34), and to the fact that Jesus prayed (xi. 41 f., xii. 27–30, xiv. 16, xvii): but it is hard to see why the Incarnate Logos should need to be further endowed with the Spirit of God, or even should need to pray. Moreover, we notice that the two prayers in xi and xii are both offered rather for the benefit of bystanders than for the benefit of him who offered them: "because of the crowd standing round I said it" (xi. 42); "this voice came not for my sake, but for your sakes" (xii. 30). Is that real prayer?

Furthermore—and this is a point of great importance for our purpose—the resultant figure of Jesus, though more heavily-loaded with Divine attributes in the Fourth Gospel than in the Synoptic account, is ethically less noble, and therefore to some extent less worshipful and less truly Divine.[1] The Johannine Jesus is indeed represented as the

[1] "Those things which are looked upon as human, His meek and lowly and pure heartedness, are infinitely more divine than mere knowledge or power" (W. Fearon Halliday, *Reconciliation and Reality*, 63).

Saviour of the world and the close friend of the individual believer: he receives all who come to him (Jn. vi. 37), and is the bestower of eternal life. But inasmuch as eternal life is now defined simply as knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent (Jn. xvii. 3), there is a comparative loss of interest in—and a comparative lack of stress upon—the ethical conditions of salvation and the ethical character of the Saviour. Thus, Jesus is not depicted as being subject to temptation, as being the friend of tax-collectors and sinners, as seeking the lost, or as weeping over Jerusalem. He does not so much as mention repentance. He has nothing to say about love for enemies, but observes that there is no greater love than self-sacrifice for one's *friends* (xv. 13). The tone of his controversies with the Jews is often so acrimonious (e.g. viii. 23–25, 42–44) that it is a relief to know that they probably have little foundation in fact. I am not forgetting here his denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees as recorded by the Synoptists. But apart from the fact that even they contain historically dubious elements, their passion does not breathe the cold bitterness of the Johannine arguings; besides, the ground of them is the Pharisees' hypocrisy and general moral blindness, not—as in 'John'—their unreadiness to acknowledge that Jesus was "he". It is not sufficient to reply to this general criticism that the

Fourth Evangelist presupposed the Synoptic story as known and therefore not needing to be repeated, and that the ascription of Divine attributes to Jesus is already visible in Mark. The balance of emphasis has shifted from where Jesus himself laid it (his consuming passion to bring men to God) to the metaphysical significance of his own Person. "The heart of the man Jesus in its rich fulness of grace and spiritual truth is more adequately shown in the first three Gospels than in the Fourth".[1]

Of the development of Christological thought between the Apostolic Age and A.D. 325, I must be content to speak only very broadly. On the whole it may be said that Jesus remains for the Church the Divine Lord who brings salvation from God to man. Full Divinity is on all sides ascribed to him, and thought is busy relating him monotheistically to the Father and in evolving the doctrine of the Trinity. It must not, however, be supposed that all Christians gave Jesus the same place in their thought and life as was given, let us say, by Athanasius, Luther, and Wesley. There is evidence of a great variety of attitudes, and sometimes astonishing poverty of religious understanding, on the part both of Christian writers and of the rank and file of Christian converts. Certain of the Apologists (Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus), though they discourse philo-

[1] A. B. Bruce, *Apologetics*, 490; cf. 345, 489 f., 511.

sophically about the Logos, have nothing at all to say about Jesus as man. Other authors, widely read in the Church, such as 'Barnabas' and Hermas, display but little knowledge of and interest in his earthly life, especially as regards its ethical character. A sense of personal union with Christ such as Paul enjoyed is extremely rare. It is clear also that for large numbers of Christians the idea of forgiveness was very vague, and the death of Christ was an inexplicable and therefore religiously uninteresting datum of their belief, except as a quasi-magic symbol.[1] So keenly did some feel the difficulty of uniting his Divinity and his humanity that they explained away the phenomena of his human life as unreal and only apparent. This view—Doketism—was indeed ruled out by most Christians; but it strongly colours the views even of writers like Clement of Alexandria and Hilary of Poitiers, who think of Jesus as eating, drinking, etc., solely for the purpose of giving an *impression* of humanity to his contemporaries. As the late Dr. H. R. Mackintosh has said, "Theories which start, not from the historical Christ, but from the pre-existent Word, and proceed by way of deduction, will always be in grave hazard on the side of docetism, and Clement is no exception".[2] The early Christians generally evince a sense that Jesus'

[1] See C. N. Moody, *The Mind of the Early Converts*, 2, 3 n., 13, 15 n., 24, 26, 29 f., 32, 37, 41, 43, 45, 80, 92, 95, 112, 140 f., 164, 191 n. 7, 281.
[2] *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 163.

ethical teaching is to be obeyed and his example in a rough way copied; and besides being fruitful in Christian conduct,[1] this sense of responsibility leads to serious discussions regarding Christian practice. But normally Jesus' moral goodness is not explicitly related to his Divinity. Tertullian is an honourable exception here—for he directly appeals to the patience of Jesus as evidence of his Divine nature: "He who had purposed to lie hid in the form of a man, in no wise imitated man's impatience. From this more than anything else ought ye Pharisees to have recognized the Lord; no (mere) man would ever practice patience of this kind".[2] On the whole, however, the connexion is either left to be taken for granted, or is forgotten altogether. The Christologies of Irenæus and Athanasius are Apollinarian in interest and effect, if not in their verbal form.[3] The whole process has been admirably characterized by Dr. Vernon Bartlet:

"Irenæus struck the key-note of Greek theology at its best, when he said of the Divine Son or Logos, 'He

[1] One Victorinus of Pettau wrote, about A.D. 290: "Sic nec satis est Christianum dici et se ipsum confiteri et Christiani opera non habere". But see Harnack's remarks in *Mission and Expans.* (Eng. trans.), i. 88 n. 2, regarding the limited extent to which Christians aspired to a real "imitatio Christi". It was mainly the martyrs and ascetics who were supposed to be following the example of Jesus.

[2] Tertull., *De Patientia*, 3. Cf. C. N. Moody, *The Mind of the Early Converts*, 227 ("There are few sentences of this kind in Early Christian literature"), 295 f. Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, and Lactantius also lay stress on the moral character of Jesus.

[3] Cf. H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*, etc., 299, especially n. 2: ("... Athanasius constantly denies that Christ was ἄνθρωπος"), and in *The Modern Churchman*, Sept. 1921, 279.

for the sake of His own boundless love was made what we are, in order that He might render us what He Himself is'. But the form which this idea took became in the course of the next two centuries far less historical and experimental, far more metaphysical and abstract; with results momentous for Christianity. The process by which this came about . . . is marked by tendencies (i) to press the analysis of the Divine and human aspects of the historic Christ to so sharp a contrast of 'natures' in the abstract, that these could not be thought together again in a personal unity; (ii) to carry speculation as to the Logos beyond its relation to human experience, back into the Eternal Being of Deity; (iii) to lose touch with the unity of the Saviour's moral personality—the real unity for us men, and that which yields our religious knowledge of both Deity and manhood—and so to realise less and less the saving power of His person as set forth in the Gospel narrative; (iv) to conceive salvation as the divinising of human nature as nature, *i.e.* physically rather than personally, through transfusion with the Divine nature".[1]

Enough has now been said to show that, in making the praiseworthy attempt to think out a satisfactory Christology, the Church committed the mistake of to some extent sacrificing morals and history to metaphysics. The grave results of that mistake are seen, not only in the imperfections of

[1] Bartlet and Carlyle, *Christianity in Hist.*, 245 f. Cf. also Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (Eng. trans.), 184 (". . . That . . . it is a perverse proceeding to make Christology the fundamental substance of the Gospel, is shown by Christ's teaching, . . ."); Bartlet in *The Lord of Life*, 132, 143, 146 (". . . The metaphysical obscured the psychological or human approach to Christology; . . .");

the fully-developed doctrine as crystallized at Chalcedon in A.D. 451, but still more tragically in the dreadful oblivion to which the moral requirements of Christian discipleship were in large measure consigned in the course of the Middle Ages, with their carnage and persecution and cruelty. There were, of course, noteworthy exceptions to the general lapse. Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard, Francis, and many others, treasured the character and example of Jesus. But Christians as a whole largely failed to see the connexion between ardent loyalty to their Church and the cultivation of a Christ-like character. When, for instance, in 1576 the disciplined Spanish brigands in the service of Philip II marched to their savage and unprovoked sack of Antwerp, their leader's standard was emblazoned with a picture of the crucified Saviour; and before proceeding to their damnable acts of butchery and pillage, they knelt to offer prayer to God in Jesus' name. Such woeful stultification of Christianity had been made possible by the stress that had so long been laid on the primary importance of orthodox belief as compared with moral obedience. That stress was the most prominent feature in the history of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Dr. H. E. Fosdick has more than once drawn attention to the fatal habit of evading the moral responsibilities of Christian discipleship by worship-

ping instead of following Jesus. His words are somewhat rhetorical, and his antithesis perhaps over-pressed: but there is truth and force in his contention.

"To dress Him up in elaborate metaphysical creeds, hide His two piercing eyes in the smoke of sacramental adoration, build beautiful sanctuaries where His challenging social ideals may fade out in vague mysticism, get Him off somewhere on a high altar, pray to Him, sing to Him, do anything for Him rather than let Him get back again where He started, walking the common ways of men and talking about how to live—that always has been the most successful way of getting rid of Jesus. . . . It is an amazing thing that the historic Church has so unanimously worshipped Jesus and has so seldom stopped to ask what Jesus Himself would think of it. . . . He does not want His ego idolized; He wants His cause supported. . . . What He has seen is something different—countless millions of people worshipping Him emotionally but not morally. . . . Not everyone —ah, my soul, not anyone who merely says, 'Lord, Lord!' but he that doeth the Father's will".[1]

Again, he wonders how Christians

"manage to get rid of the real Jesus and to escape His ethical demands on life. Not by crucifying Him! They would not do that. Not by denying Him! They would not do that. Strange anomaly! They get rid of Him by adoring Him, by making Him God, by pushing Him off to some distant heaven, by thinking of Him mainly over the high altar of the church, safely distant from their daily lives, by putting Him into

[1] *The Christian World*, 30th Apl. 1931.

magnificent creeds . . .—anything, except to face Him and His demand, 'Follow me'. Ah, Christ, this is the saddest thing that ever happened to you and it is your friends who have done it. . . . So they did that incredible yet inevitable thing, they made Christ the sponsor of their wars, they dragged His name over to bless their slaughterous crusades, and ever since He has been forced to march in His scarlet robe with all the armies of Christendom. O Christ, your crucifixion on Calvary was nothing compared with that! . . ." [1]

The one safeguard against such aberration and its consequences lies surely in keeping close to the real Jesus of history. Historians differ as to how far Jesus' personal character and the impression it made on his contemporaries and those who later heard about him, were responsible for the inception and marvellous growth of the Church. Some assign to these factors a relatively minor part in comparison with the striking announcement of the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Future Advent of the Saviour-God.[2] Now we must not assume that what made Christianity spread most rapidly was necessarily the most precious element in it or the truest possible account of its Founder's person. Nevertheless, it is probable that the achieved human goodness of Jesus himself was an immense factor in commending the Christian

[1] *The Christian World*, 20th May, 1937.
[2] Cf. A. D. Nock, *Conversion*, 210; F. C. Grant in *Journ. of Bibl. Lit.*, Mar. 1935, 1–15; L. P. Jacks in *Hibbert Journ.*, Jan. 1937, 299.

faith to all and sundry, as it was undoubtedly an element of absolutely central value for men called to put their trust in him.[1] Confessedly the personal example of Jesus would be barren for those who did not recognize its deep significance, who saw in his face no "light of the knowledge of the glory of God". Confessedly also, those who did appreciate its Divine meaning must immediately have formulated *some* doctrine of his Person, however simple. But the fact remains that the personal character of the human Jesus is fundamental to Christianity; and this fact justifies the Liberal Modernist contention that tradition must be judged by the historical facts, not the historical facts by tradition.

[1] Cf. W. Morgan, *Relig. and Theol. of Paul*, 41 ("That the Synoptic Gospels were preserved meant nothing less than the saving of Christianity"), and *Times Lit. Suppl't's.* review of Nock (8th Feb. 1934, 86).

CHAPTER 4

THE WAY TO THE REAL JESUS

IN the last chapter we considered the traditional Christology of the Church, and saw that, while it uniformly safeguarded the conviction that God was truly and uniquely in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, it did not, in its earliest stages, arrive at any one concept or doctrine which finally explained the nature of the Divine Indwelling in him and its relation to the Divine Indwelling in God's servants generally. Further, I urged that the Church's Christology was rendered in some respects defective by the increasing tendency to locate the Divinity of Jesus in the metaphysical composition of his person rather than in the spiritual and moral quality of his character. I also pointed out that the upshot of the Christological efforts of the early centuries was the permanent adoption of a Formula which on four or five distinct issues is inconsistent with the recorded facts of our Saviour's life, and which Liberal Modernism is consequently bound to reject. I therefore appealed from the traditional Christology so culminating to the real Jesus of history, not thereby

wishing or intending to disregard the uniform Christian testimony concerning his Divine Saviourhood and Lordship, but hoping to be able to view them more truly by studying afresh the factual roots from which the traditional Christology sprang.[1]

Before, however, I can pursue such an appeal further, I must try to meet one or two objections that have been brought against it on grounds other than a pure assertion of the supreme claims of Chalcedon.

(1) It has been said that we do not possess the materials that would be required for such a return to the historical beginnings. On various counts the adequacy of such evidence as we possess is denied. The advocates of the Christ-myth-theory, for instance, dissolve the Gospel-narrative into a tissue of religious fancies. Some of the recent Form-critics, notably Dr. Rudolf Bultmann, interpret the stories about Jesus and the ostensible records of his teaching as being largely the products of the early Christian community, or at any rate as so deeply buried in such products that no veridical history of Jesus himself can be extracted from the Gospels as they stand. A more plausible basis might be found for this non-possumus attitude in

[1] Cf. G. Kittel in *Mysterium Christi*, 40, 46. It is curious to find the very insistence on historical truth censured as if it were equivalent to religious lukewarmness. Yet here is a worthy believer writing to *The Christian World* (17th Dec. 1931, 9), who, after depicting the quest for the historic Jesus, asks: "Why do you desire to be unbiassed? To be unbiassed in the great things is to become an automaton. . . . There is such a thing, sir, as a morbid conscientiousness in the pursuit of truth. . . ."

the fact that every scrap of our material was composed and collected by men who had no interest in the history of the past for its own sake, but who were interested in it only because they had already as members of the Church accepted a transcendental view of Jesus' Person.[1] That being so, we cannot —it is suggested—ever hope to distil from what they tell us a picture of him closer to the facts than that which is given us in the religious beliefs of the Church.

In answer to this objection, I would submit, to begin with, that the Christ-myth-theory (though still now and then revived) really deserves by this time to be treated as exploded—and I believe a similar fate awaits at no great interval the extreme scepticism of some of the Form-critics. The suggestion that the strong religious interest of all our evangelists renders it impossible for us to get behind their statements and nearer to the actual facts, presupposes a principle of judgment which would—if consistently acted on—bring all historical investigation to a standstill; for every reconstruction of the past rests on our being to some extent able to make allowance for the personal interests and viewpoints of our informants, and so learn something distinctive of the objective facts

[1] Cf. G. Kittel in *Mysterium Christi*, 48; Hoskyns and Davey, *The Riddle of the N.T.*, 281 (yet on 249 the extraordinary statement is made: "Nowhere in the New Testament are the writers imposing an interpretation on a history"); Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, etc., 126–129.

they profess to be narrating. It is, I hold, quite perverse to argue, on this or on any other ground, that real knowledge of the historical Jesus, in partial distinction from the Christ-picture treasured by Christian devotion, is beyond our reach. "As to the difficulties and uncertainties of historical evidence", writes Dr. H. G. Wood, "they form no justification for ignoring historical probabilities. . . . Our belief and conduct will both be wrong if we refuse to take into account the probabilities established by historical inquiry".[1]

(2) Attempts to reconstruct the life, character, and teaching of Jesus by making full use of critical methods are sometimes declared to have already definitely ended in failure. And forasmuch as these attempts have been for the most part the works of Liberal theologians, the news is trumpeted forth that Liberalism is outmoded and that the Liberal Jesus never existed. The very attempt to sift the evidence in the light of inherent probabilities, and to draw therefrom the natural conclusions, is stigmatized as rationalistic and sceptical; and those who make it are accused of handling the evidence

[1] *Christianity and the Nature of History*, xxvii f. The best recent discussion of the historical value of the Gospel-narrative, especially in view of the work of the Form-critics, is Dr. Vincent Taylor's book, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (1935), which he himself describes as written "in the belief that the task of our generation is a renewed, untiring investigation of the problems of Gospel Origins" (21). Professor R. H. Lightfoot's Bampton Lectures, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (1935), constitute a valuable discussion of the same theme; but the inferences he draws from the undoubted fact that the earliest Synoptist contains interpretation as well as history, seem to me to err unduly in the direction of scepticism.

on the arbitrary basis of their own a priori humanistic prejudices. Occasionally the ridiculous charge is made that modern critics have purposely assigned documents to late dates on the ground of their dislike of the supernatural or other features contained in them.[1] In the same spirit critical discussions of the Fourth Gospel are not infrequently but quite unwarrantably misrepresented as "attacks" upon it.

Now without pretending that all Liberal work on the life of Jesus is satisfactory and adequate, I do submit that this whole line of argument is absurd. You cannot sanction the use of criticism to establish, say, the priority of Mark, or the existence of Q, or the late date of John, or the fictitious character of the Apocryphal Gospels, and then, when on precisely similar principles conclusions are drawn regarding, say, the Nature-

[1] A bad case of this occurs in Rev. R. A. Edwards' article in *The Hibbert Journ.*, July 1935, 523 f. (cf. 526). I pointed out the injustice of the charge in the issue of Jan. 1936 (289 f.); and Mr. Edwards replied (Apl. 1936, 445) that "nothing could have been further from (his) mind" than to impute dishonesty to Liberal Modernists in their treatment of the texts; and he explained that he had had in mind the nineteenth century, when the idea of an incarnation was at a discount. But he had actually spoken of "the tendency among modern scholars who favour some form of the peasant theory to date the books . . . so as to allow time for the development of the Christian legend", etc. (note "modern", and the *tense* of "favour").

Cf. the gratuitous statements of Dr. Relton in *A Study in Christology*, 236 (". . . it is satisfactory to note that all the *efforts of rationalism and Liberal criticism have not yet succeeded* in reducing the Christ of history within the categories of a purely human type of personality . . ."), 259 (". . . no critical ingenuity has *succeeded in* eliminating" the Q passage, Mt. xi. 27 = Lk. x. 22: italics in both cases mine), and of a writer in *Times Lit. Supplt.*, 7th Dec. 1933, 864 ("The nineteenth-century Liberal Protestant cry of 'Back from Paul to Jesus' was actuated largely by dislike of the alleged Pauline view of the death of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice").

Miracles, or the Virgin Birth, cry out against the a priori prejudices of the investigator. Either in deference to the uniqueness of Jesus you rule out altogether any appeal to inherent probability (such as historians everywhere else have to make)—in which case *all* Gospel-criticism must be pronounced invalid—or, if you wish to avail yourself of the critical work on the Synoptic problem, you must acknowledge the legitimacy of the appeal to inherent probability in the case of the Nature-miracles and other difficult elements in the story. And when we *do* compare in detail the pictures of Jesus given firstly in Q or Proto-Luke, secondly in Mark, thirdly in 'Matthew', fourthly in John, and fifthly in the Apocryphal Gospels, we can trace clearly the steady tendency to depart more and more from the historical facts in the supposed interests of devotion and edification. I have drawn attention elsewhere to

"the fact that the two earliest of our Gospel documents, Q and L, contain no allusion to any 'nature-miracle', that Mark has made two crowd-feedings out of one, that 'Matthew' several times over gratuitously doubles the recipients of a work of healing, that in order to exhibit a close fulfilment of prophecy he represents Jesus as riding on two asses at once, that, whereas it is certain from the Synoptics that Jesus never divulged his Messiahship to the disciples before Cæsarea-Philippi and to the public before his trial, the Fourth Gospel represents him as talking openly to all and sundry

about it from his baptism onwards . . . the impossibility of weaving together a consistent account of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, without contradicting one or other of the authorities at every step. . . . Does this condition of things reveal freedom from credulity, or protection against it through the presence of people in a position to correct erroneous statements? Does it not, in fact, prove . . . that during the first century Christian beliefs about Jesus underwent very extensive growth? . . ." [1]

While therefore it is true that even the earliest documents we have were composed from religious and not only historical motives, the comparative critical method does enable us in some measure to arrive at a more trustworthy view of Jesus' actual life, character, and teaching, than that with which the Church came to be satisfied. "It is fatal", as the late Dr. H. R. Mackintosh once pointed out, "to tamper with the Gospel stories by checking our first instinct to understand them humanly; by applying an unknown standard of divinity we shall but lose the man, and be no nearer God".[2] In particular it is very bad policy for traditionalists to refer complacently as they do to Schweitzer's eschatologism and Bultmann's use of Formgeschichte as having triumphantly demolished the Liberal picture of Jesus; for Schweitzer and the extreme Form-critics, if taken too seriously, make it

[1] *Hibbert Journ.* Jan. 1936, 291.
[2] *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 480 (cf. 466); also G. Kittel in *Mysterium Christi*, 40.

not easier, but very much harder, for us to share the Church's estimate of the greatness of her Founder.

(3) Eager research into the historical facts of Jesus' life on earth is sometimes deprecated on the plea that the truth, even if more fully obtainable, would be disappointingly meagre, and would therefore leave an unbridgeable gulf between the ascertained facts of history and the glowing content of early Christian belief. The grounds for this plea are partly (i) the fact that much of the outward detail of Jesus' life, though doubtless most interesting to the curious, would really have little religious or moral significance for us, partly (ii) the fact that, during his ministry, his followers (on whose reports we are necessarily dependent) were at an elementary stage of understanding, and partly (iii) the idea that even Jesus himself, whilst on earth, was unable (because of certain limitations either in his followers or in himself) to make a full revelation of his being or his mission. In view of these circumstances there has arisen in recent years a strange willingness on the part of certain groups of scholars to make the amplest concessions to the demands of historical criticism, even criticism of a negative kind, while blandly maintaining the fullest possible confidence in the credal Christology generally. The idea seems to be that, so long as the original details can be shown to be undiscoverable, the affirmations of the Creeds not only can never

be disproved, but can even be vindicated by (*a*) the transcendental Christology visible in the earliest Gospel-documents, and (*b*) by the greatness of the Church which Jesus founded.

In reply I would urge that it was daily contact with the human Jesus which began the movement culminating in the Church. No belief in the presence of the Risen Christ with his Church disproves the vital importance of the impact of his earthly life on his followers. And if his personal presence and example and teaching had such far-reaching effects, it would seem to follow that the clearer the vision of him which historical study can give us, the more plentifully shall we be able to receive the inspiration which his first followers enjoyed. This expectation is fully borne out by actual experience: for again and again those who, without any theological presuppositions, have familiarized themselves with his earthly story, have found in it a source of religious and moral renewal closely resembling in quality and power the change effected by his personal presence in the lives of his early followers. To quote the late Dr. H. R. Mackintosh again:

"In this experience of slowly dawning recognition, the first disciples are surely the forerunners and exemplars of many in our time. Indeed the situation of the modern inquirer is in some ways curiously like theirs. They were of course confronted with no august tradition on the subject of Jesus' person; . . . And once again

today, for many the tradition regarding Christ may be said to be non-existent . . . reverence, equally with candour, bids them refuse assent to theorems which they have no convincing grounds for acknowledging as true. Hence they come into the presence of Jesus with a fresh, unbiassed soul. . . . And the spectacle of Jesus mastering these men, bending them before Him in homage, admiration, obedience, and finally lowly trust and worship, is the ever renewed-proof, such as doctrine needs and will always find, that in giving Jesus the supreme place our faith is based on irrefragable reality ".[1]

Somewhat similarly, Dr. Albert Schweitzer :

" Anyone who ventures to look the historical Jesus straight in the face and to listen for what He may have to teach him in His powerful sayings, soon ceases to ask what this strange-seeming Jesus can still be to him. He learns to know Him as One who claims authority over him. . . . The true relation to Him is to be taken possession of by Him. . . ." [2]

And most significantly perhaps of all, Dr. Neville S. Talbot, in his recent book, ' Great Issues ', speaks of " the obscuration of the essential Christian gospel by doctrinal veils ", and continues :

" In the development of Christian doctrine there has, I think, been a displacement of the centre of gravity from God to our Lord. We may put it that the christological issue has displaced the theological. . . . We must begin at Bethlehem, but historically and not doctrinally, that is, not with Christian Incarnational doctrine in our spectacles. . . . We must so begin, for it is real to

[1] *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 351 f.
[2] *My Life and Thought*, 71.

do so, and nemesis falls on unreality. Such a nemesis does threaten the Christmas-carol frame of mind. I fancy that a certain conflict of loyalties is set up in many good Christians at Christmas time. Their hearts go one way and their heads another. Both heart and head can go the same way only if they come back to Bethlehem after following Jesus, after following Him as actually His disciples followed Him, not knowing who He was, until He had accomplished the work which was given Him to do. . . . This is sheer history. It belongs to that recovery of the real humanity, the real experience of Jesus, which is the chief and precious and positive outcome of modern study of the New Testament. It is the result of the disinterment of history from the cerements of dogma".[1]

It is true that some details concerning Jesus will be less significant than others; but all may help to clarify our vision. It is true that we get our information from men who knew him only when their own thoughts were immature; but they actually had *him* in their midst. The supposition that Jesus was somehow unable to say what was needed about himself seems to me quite gratuitous. It is only in an historically dubious Johannine discourse (Jn. xvi. 12) that he is represented as holding things back because the disciples could not bear them. His silence regarding the vicariously-atoning character of his death is generally adduced

[1] N. S. Talbot, *Great Issues* (1936), 51, 57 f. I do not want, by quoting these extracts, to claim Dr. Talbot as sharing the whole position maintained in this chapter. Nevertheless, his stress on the importance of regaining a real sense of the historical Jesus is highly significant.

as the prime instance of this reserve: but had he wished to impart it, there seems no reason why he should not have done so, for it was an idea which would have fitted in readily with his followers' normal religious views. Nor does the suggestion under discussion harmonize at all well with the confidence and passion characterizing his utterances as recorded by the Synoptists. The parable, for instance, of the two houses with which the Sermon on the Mount concludes (Mt. vii. 24–27 = Lk. vi. 47–49) does not read like the teaching of one who was conscious of being unable as yet to give his hearers more than a fragment of the truth they most urgently needed. And finally, I hold that it is theologically suicidal to pretend that the statements in the Creeds are not affected by surrendering, out of deference to an extreme and negative criticism, a large part of the Biblical data on which these credal statements were directly based, and conceding the unfounded contention that precise knowledge of Jesus himself is not to be had.[1]

It has been urged that the main credal affirmations may yet be true despite the abandonment of *some* of the ancient grounds on which they were based. That, indeed, is possible; but whether it be actually so or not can be ascertained only by re-examining (independently of the Creeds) such of the grounds as have *not* been abandoned.

[1] Cf. A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 58–69.

In the absence of adequate *literary* evidence for the primitive date of the full Christology of later times, appeal is sometimes made to the continuous *tradition* of the Church, which we know to have run back to her very beginnings, and which exhibits no trace of violent or substantial change in the Christian view of Jesus. Thus Dr. Gore writes:

". . . This kind of *conservative* note, implying that 'the churches' were one organized society, pledged to a specific doctrine, moral, theological, sacramental, disciplinary, accepted as the word of God, runs through the New Testament books, and you cannot get behind it. And from the first it rests on the assumption that the Apostles were the authorized and trustworthy interpreters of Christ, . . . and that their Gospel was His Gospel".[1]

The existence and the continuity of the tradition that Jesus had come from God as Lord and Saviour may be readily admitted: but the wide differences between the several accounts of his person given in the different documents making up the New Testament prove quite conclusively that the unity of the tradition did not involve any single and definitive doctrinal interpretation.

(4) A fourth objection arises from the very nature of history as such. Some element of uncertainty, greater or less, necessarily inheres in all our knowledge of the past; and the story of Jesus is no exception to this general truth. But religious faith

[1] In *A New Comm. on Holy Scripture*, i. 12 b: cf. Kidd, *Hist. of the Church to A.D. 461*, i. 24, 269, 276; Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 111 (quotation from B. Warfield).

can be satisfied with nothing less than a *certain* foundation; and therefore, it is said, our faith as Christians cannot really be based on our historical knowledge concerning Jesus' life on earth. Hence the attempt of some to overleap the limitations of history, and to pin our faith to the eternal Divine Christ as the Word of God, a procedure which has the advantage of rendering us religiously indifferent to the worst that negative critics may do with the Gospel-story.

This argument opens up the vast and mystifying philosophical problem of the precise relationship between religious belief (in particular, Christian belief) and historical knowledge—a problem on which innumerable books and articles have been written. The solution which seems to me most satisfying is to accept the critically-sifted history of Jesus (despite its minor elements of uncertainty) as a datum no less real and usable than all the other objective data of our experience, to which of course some slight element of uncertainty always clings, and to accept it as crucial for our religious faith in the sense and for the reason that it makes explicit and strong that trust in God which is implicitly or tentatively presupposed in all our intellectual, moral, and religious aspirations.[1]

[1] I am indebted chiefly to my brother's book, *A New Orthodoxy of Jesus and Personality* (1934), for this interpretation of the religious significance of the historical life of Jesus. That his view was not so radical a departure from traditionalism as might at first sight appear may be realized by a perusal of Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 40–42.

Tennyson's familiar words well express the main fact:

> " Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
> Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
> We yield all blessing to the name
> Of Him that made them current coin; . . ." [1]

I shall have a little more to say later about the religious significance of the history of Jesus for us: for the moment I want only to add a couple of subsidiary replies to the objection raised.

(*a*) It is not consistent to lay, as Barthians do in common with other Christians, decisive stress on the *historical* character of God's revelation through Christ, and then profess indifference to the facts making up the history through which the revelation is supposed to have come. And lest anyone should think " indifference " too strong a term to use here, let me quote some actual words penned by Dr. Emil Brunner:

" The biography of Jesus of Nazareth—this latest product of an ill-informed theology—would have been just as repulsive to the early Christians as a mummified corpse is repulsive to us. Jesus of Nazareth, the rabbi, the so-called historical Jesus, was an object of no interest for the early Christians and is of no interest to-day for those who have preserved some understanding of what Christian faith means. What interests the Church and the believer is Jesus *Christ*—the Jesus in whom God speaks to us His Word. The ' historical Jesus ' is a corpse, a scientific abstraction which is of no value to us. It was not the deeds, the life, the teaching of the

[1] *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

rabbi Jesus, that Mark or Luke wanted to hand down to posterity; like the author of the Fourth Gospel they wanted to tell the deeds and the Word of God in Jesus Christ".[1]

(*b*) As soon as a new scrap of papyrus is deciphered, or a new theory broached, which seems likely to add an iota to our knowledge of Jesus' earthly life, scholars and preachers—not excluding those who were warning us erstwhile against the danger of knowing Christ too much after the flesh—are to be seen tumbling over one another in their eagerness to get at any fresh facts about Jesus which they can learn from the new evidence. Their praiseworthy zeal is perhaps the best acknowledgment—all the more eloquent because indirect—of the rightness of the position for which I am here contending, namely, that, inasmuch as we Christians are concerned with an historical revelation, it is our business to know the relevant history as completely and truthfully as we can.

The first stage in the reconstruction of our picture of the real Jesus is the separation from the Gospel-story of those elements which belong in all probability to the unhistorical embroidery with which Christian devotion adorned his memory. The task of identifying these unhistorical elements is not in the nature of an "attack" made by

[1] *The Word and the World*, 87 f. Brunner's later reflections on the question are given in his *Philos. of Relig.*, 166–169.

"materialists", "sceptics", and "rationalists", but is the work of that love of truth and common-sense-loyalty to evidence, which we all know to be valid everywhere else, and which Jesus himself, with his stern demand for sincerity, would be the first to condemn us for not using here also. Here, then, are the features in the story which there are good reasons for discarding, or at all events, gravely doubting, on historical grounds.

(1) Jesus was in all probability not miraculously born of a virgin, but was the legally-born son of Joseph and Mary. I have enumerated and discussed elsewhere [1] the various grounds on which most modern Liberals conclude that the ascription of a Virgin Birth to Jesus by Luke and the author of 'Matthew' is to be accounted for as a devout legend rather than as a reliable historical record. I refrain, therefore, from enumerating these grounds here, and confine myself to one observation. In Isaiah vii. 14, a normal and non-miraculous, but significant, birth from a "young woman" (הָעַלְמָה) is foretold. When this passage was translated into Greek in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, the young woman was gratuitously transformed into "the virgin" (*ἡ παρθένος*), and the birth was thus represented as miraculous. This Greek version was the only form in which the Old Testament was known to many of the early

[1] In *Catholicism and Christianity*, 348–356.

Christians; and they searched it diligently for prophecies regarding Jesus the Messiah. We have several instances in the Matthæan story of Jesus of prophecies which clearly in the first place could not have referred to him being stated to have been fulfilled by him, e.g. Matthew ii. 15, 17 f. In face of the immense historical and other difficulties in the birth-stories, therefore, do we need to look further than the Septuagint rendering of Isaiah vii. 14, which we find actually quoted in Matthew i. 22 f., for the source of the belief that Jesus was virgin-born?

I do not therefore agree with the statement: "Concerning the origin of the belief in the Virgin Birth the critical historian can say nothing".[1] Still less can I accept as satisfactory Dr. Karl Barth's extraordinary account of the matter in his book, 'Credo'.[2] His discussion of the Virgin Birth is one of the worst instances I have met of a theologian's sense of historical truth and the value of historical evidence being blunted to the point of virtual destruction by an overwhelming concern for his own dogmatic standpoint. The force or relevance of the historical evidence is not considered; indeed, it is hardly more than just mentioned. Yet the Virgin Birth, Barth tells us, should be believed because we cannot safely separate the form or sign

[1] Hoskyns and Davey, *The Riddle of the N.T.*, 135 f.
[2] Barth, *Credo*, 63, 68–72, 178 f., 190.

(Virgin Birth) from the content or thing (real Incarnation).

"The miracle of the Virgin Birth has not ontic but noetic significance. It advertises what here takes place . . . the sinful element that has here to be excluded will . . . not have to be sought in the act of marriage or in sexual life as such, but in the sovereignty of human will and power and activity generally and as such . . . Therefore the judgment strikes the male; therefore Joseph is excluded as earthly father of Jesus".

One would have thought that, in that case, Mary also should have been excluded: but she can "be blessed, because she has believed (Luke i. 45), not on the score of her virginity, not on the score of her femininity". Why Joseph too could not have been similarly blessed, Barth does not undertake to explain. He concludes his chapter on the subject by observing "that in the theologians who reject the Virgin Birth, one comes, at a lesser or greater remove, upon a 'natural theology' limiting the theology of free grace". Quietly to substitute in this way one's own dogmatic preferences for the evidence as to what actually happened is to reduce the profession of loyalty to historical truth to a pure farce.

(2) Jesus was probably born, not at Bethlehem, but at Nazareth, his parents' normal home. If one is satisfied that the Virgin-Birth-story is not historical, but owes its origin to the mistaken

application of Isaiah vii. 14 (in its Septuagintal form) to Jesus, it becomes more natural to believe that the assertion that he was born at Bethlehem similarly arose from Micah v. 2, which passage is also quoted in Matthew ii. 5 f., as having been fulfilled in Jesus' birth. " Was not our Lord the Messiah foretold in Scripture ? ", Christians of the second generation would ask one another, " and where else could the Messiah have been born but at Bethlehem, as Micah says ? " This supposition as to the origin of the Bethlehem-idea is confirmed by the mutual inconsistencies and numerous other inherent difficulties in the Lucan and Matthæan birth-stories.

(3) He was not omniscient.[1]

(4) He probably did not walk on the water, or still a storm, or multiply loaves and fishes, or wither a fig-tree. Apart from all question of impossibility or inherent improbability, the actual evidence for these " Nature-miracles " is distinctly weaker than that for the healings and the raisings from the dead ; for no Nature-miracle occurs in Q (the collection of teachings used by Luke and in ' Matthew ') and none more startling than a great catch of fish (Lk. v. 1–11) in L (the matter peculiar to Luke). The earliest Gospel-document in which we find real Nature-miracles recorded is the Gospel of Mark, written probably about A.D. 67. It has

[1] See the discussion of this point above, pp: 85–89.

indeed been truly observed that the duplication of the crowd-feeding by Mark (vi. 34–44, viii. 1–9, 14–21) indicates that the story was considerably older than the composition of his Gospel. But if appeal is to be made to the possible sources of Mark, we must not ignore the possible sources of Q and L. We do not know *how much* earlier than A.D. 67 the story of the miracle of the loaves and fishes may be. Moreover, the statement that Jesus increased a few loaves and fishes into enough food for 5,000 persons surely requires stronger evidence, before it can reasonably be believed, than a narrative written down *even considerably less* than thirty-seven years (A.D. 67 minus A.D. 30) after the supposed occurrence, especially in view of the tendency (clearly demonstrable elsewhere) to adorn the Saviour's record with imaginary wonder-stories. The withering of the fig-tree (Mk. xi. 12–14, 20–24 —heightened in Mt. xxi. 18–22 and omitted by Luke) seems almost certainly a garbled version of the very probable *parable* in Luke xiii. 6–9; and if so, the inclusion of it in Mark as a miracle throws an unfavourable light on his other Nature-miracles.

I therefore submit that the general acceptance of the healing-miracles and the rejection of the Nature-miracles is not to be set down as due to a priori prejudice in favour of immanentism;[1] nor is it to be tacitly treated as a departure from

[1] So Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 264.

"the Christian standpoint".[1] It is rather an objective historical judgment, such as would be accepted without cavil if the story were any other than that of our Lord's life. It is no answer to this judgment to urge that miracles are integral to the Gospel-story (for this, however true of the healings, is not true of the Nature-miracles), or that the Nature-miracles are easy of belief in face of the still more stupendous miracle of God's saving work through Christ. Considered from the religious point of view, stories of supernatural physical marvels with no definitely moral character of their own figure largely in primitive religions as evidence for the presence and activity of the Divine, and have often been preferred by Christians, before the religious and moral character of Jesus, as proofs of his Divinity. Thus Leo the Great, in his famous 'Tome' (A.D. 451), after a long-drawn-out contrast between the Divine and human natures in Christ, observes:

"And so he whom the craft of the devil tempts as man, to him as to God do the attendant angels minister. To hunger, to thirst, to be weary, and to sleep, is evidently human. But to satisfy five thousand men with five loaves, and to impart to the Samaritan woman living water, the drinking of which would prevent the drinker thirsting again, to walk over the surface of the sea with unsinking feet, and to allay the surging waves by rebuking the storm, is undoubtedly Divine . . .",

[1] *Ibid.* 263: cf. R. A. Edwards in *Hibbert Journ.*, July 1935, 522 f., 532.

and so on.[1] But to judge from Jesus' own reply to the request for a sign (Mk. viii. 11–13 and parallels; cf. Lk. xvi. 31), the preference for such marvels as the distinctive marks of Divinity was not such as he himself would approve.

(5) He was not conscious of having been pre-existent. Paul seems to have been the first Christian who explicitly ascribed pre-existence to Jesus.[2] There is no evidence in the Synoptic Gospels for such a belief; and in 'Acts', as in his Gospel, Luke ignores it. The late Dr. Charles Harris thought there was evidence of it in Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" of himself, and probably also in the past tense of the verb *εὐδόκησα* in the voice from heaven at his baptism (Mk. i. 11).[3] But the precise sense in which Jesus used the phrase "Son of Man" of himself is too uncertain a basis on which to rest a claim on his part to pre-existence, while the aorist *εὐδόκησα* merely represents the stative perfect of the Hebrew passage quoted, a perfect which implies definiteness rather than past time. Besides, there were the previous thirty years of Jesus' life, if past time was really intended. Others have inferred a consciousness of pre-existence in Jesus from the obscure saying in Luke xi. 49.

(6) Jesus probably did not claim to forgive sins

[1] Leo, *Tome*, c. 4.
[2] See above, pp. 96 f.
[3] *Creeds or No Creeds?*, 219 f.

in his own right. There are only two Synoptic passages in which he is asserted to have himself done so.

(*a*) Mark ii. 3–12 and parallels. Here, the awkward repetition of *λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ* in 10 creates difficulty, as does also Jesus' early and public application of the term "Son of Man" to himself.[1] Hence the suggestion adopted by Dr. A. E. J. Rawlinson,[2] that "the story in its original form told simply how the man was healed of his disease", all between *λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ* in 5 and the same words at the end of 10 being an interpolation—not necessarily into the text of Mark, but into the original version of the story. If, as Dr. Rawlinson believes, "the episode of the paralytic came to be expanded in Christian preaching . . .", the persons addressed in verse 10 ("in order that ye may know") may well have been originally the preacher's audience, and in that case the clumsiness of the second *λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ* will disappear.

(*b*) Luke vii. 49—the comment made by Simon the Pharisee and his guests on Jesus' words about and to the penitent prostitute. But those words, like Mark ii. 5, were really only an *assurance of God's* forgiveness. I do not doubt that *the Synoptist believed* that Jesus was entitled to forgive sins;

[1] Cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 213–215.
[2] *St. Mark*, 24–26.

but that is not the point. Had Jesus himself actually claimed this right, the fact would surely have stamped itself more deeply on the narrative.

(7) So far as we can discover, Jesus did not regard himself as the sole exception to the rule that all men are in some sense and measure morally imperfect. It has long been customary for Christian authors to assume that absolute sinlessness was not only an indubitable datum regarding Jesus' life, but its most significant characteristic. It is, however, needful here to bear certain considerations in mind.

(*a*) The meaning of the term "sinlessness" is incapable of being clearly and precisely defined. While we can distinguish *in the abstract* between (i) conspicuous and indubitable sins committed against the light and in wilful disobedience to God, and (ii) unintentional imperfections or lapses incidental to all human life as it develops out of its initial immaturity, yet, in the actual experience of living, it is virtually impossible clearly to separate the one from the other. While differing widely in their extreme forms, these two types of imperfection interpenetrate inextricably over a broad intermediate zone. Hence it was with some reasonableness that the Jewish teaching, in which (we must remember) Jesus himself was educated, included both varieties under the general concept of "sin", such as needed the Divine pardon

(Ps. xix. 12, xc. 8; Job xxxiv. 32). It was perhaps with an eye to the unintentional imperfections that Jewish theology affirmed the universal sinfulness of men (1 Kings viii. 46; Job xv. 14 f., xxv. 4; Philo, 'Vita Mosis', iii. 17 [147]; 4 [2] Ezra viii. 35). Certain exceptions to this universality were admitted in the case of some of the Old-Testament saints; and indeed the potentiality or possibility of sinlessness was conceded to the ordinary individual; but these exceptions probably had reference to wilful transgressions only. It is not easy to say exactly what we are to make of the claims to sinlessness occasionally put forward by or on behalf of Christian individuals—such as the fourth-century monk Isidore, who said he had not been conscious of sin, even in thought, for forty years,[1] James Martineau and Henry Drummond, whom "Ian Maclaren" believed to have never known sin,[2] and Scott Holland, in whose character Mary Drew could discover no flaw.[3] It is interesting to observe that the late Dr. James Denney admitted "that there is no possibility of an empirical proof of the universality of sin".[4] But so long as our conception of sin is clear only when sin is considered as a pure abstraction, we cannot treat the sinlessness of Jesus—in the way it is usually treated

[1] Socrates, *Church History*, iv. 23.
[2] *Hibbert Journ.*, Jan. 1903, 270 f.; *Review of Reviews*, June 1897, 570 b.
[3] *Constructive Quarterly*, Dec. 1918, 768.
[4] *Romans* (in *Expositor's N.T.*), 606 b.

—as if it were one of the obvious factual data on which our Christology must be based.

(*b*) When we have regard to the Jewish conception of "sin" as covering, not only intentional wrongdoing, but unintentional error and frailty, the application of the term "sinless" to Jesus raises the difficult question of the limitations necessarily involved in his humanity and clearly attested by the Evangelists.

There is, first of all, the question as to whether the criticisms which have been directed against his ethical character on the ground of his behaviour to his mother, to the Syro-Phœnician woman, to the Pharisees, and to the traders in the Temple-Courts, are justified or not. It will not do to try to block such criticism a priori by pleading that, since our consciences are themselves the work of Jesus, we cannot in the nature of things turn them against him, or alternatively that, because we know human perfection only as it is seen in him, it is ultra vires for us to criticize him at all. If we were constitutionally incapable of discerning imperfection in his conduct (supposing for the sake of argument it were there to be discerned), we should by the same token be incapable of discerning the glory of his goodness. This criticism therefore has a right to be heard. I am not personally convinced that it is justified: but even if it were, what follows? The fact that Jesus'

intellectual outlook on life was subject to certain limiting conditions is patent from the Gospel-narrative, and is widely accepted by many conservative Christians as inevitably involved in any real "Incarnation". It necessarily follows from this fact that such limitations must have made a difference to his words and acts in religious as well as other connexions. But if these limitations were such as were inevitably incidental to a developing human mind, they were not necessarily inconsistent with a perfect desire on his part always to do the Will of God.

This conclusion, however, does not settle the question as to whether Jesus did or did not regard himself as exempt from all moral imperfection. Such little evidence as we have tends to show that he did not.

(i) Thus, the earliest non-canonical Gospel, that 'according to the Hebrews', records that, when invited by his family to go and be baptized by John, he exclaimed: "What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him?—unless perchance this very thing that I have said is ignorance". I submit that no Christian would be likely to put those words on paper, unless he had the warrant of trustworthy tradition to justify him in doing so. Moreover, the words here ascribed to Jesus would be entirely natural and fitting on the lips of one who, though trained as a child to hold the pious Jewish belief in the universality of sin,

was not himself conscious of having ever intentionally disobeyed God.[1]

(ii) The Synoptists tell us that Jesus accepted John's baptism, and Mark and Luke add that this was a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins—a fact felt by 'Matthew' to be so awkward that he refrains from describing John's baptism in those terms, and inserts a very unconvincing conversation between John and Jesus (Mt. iii. 14 f.) in order to remove the difficulty—unconvincing, because the explanation which he represents Jesus as offering is one that explains nothing. We may, of course, believe that he wished simply to identify himself sympathetically with the new and penitent people of God, or to consecrate himself more completely to the specific interests of His Kingdom, or more probably to do both: but in any case his refusal to mark himself off, on the ground of personal sinlessness, from John's other converts, is worthy of note.

(iii) Again, when accosted by the rich Ruler as "Good Teacher", Jesus replies: "Why callest thou me 'good'; there is no one who is good except one—God" (Mk. x. 17 f. = Lk. xviii. 18 f.).

[1] I met recently a devout elderly lady who told me that one of her great difficulties as a child reared in a Christian home was that, though assured by her older friends that repentance was absolutely necessary to salvation, she was not conscious of ever having done anything of which she ought to repent. She had always loved Jesus, and obeyed her mother. The difficulty remained with her right on until her baptism as a believer, when the worst defect she could find in herself was the fact that in a vague way she felt she was "a wandering sheep".

Once again 'Matthew' feels this language to be undesirable, and transfers the Ruler's "good" from the Teacher to the Teacher's requirements, so that Jesus can reply quite safely: "Why askest thou me about goodness?" (Mt. xix. 16 f.). Modern scholars see the uselessness of defending 'Matthew's' originality in this case; but they try to evade the natural meaning of Jesus' words by giving them a special interpretation. It is supposed that Jesus checked the ruler for his conventionally respectful address in order to rouse him to greater seriousness. But the story does not suggest that the ruler was not serious: and even if it had been Jesus' main purpose to make him so, why should he need to remind him that only God is absolutely good? The exegesis of the passage given by the late Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, in 'Mysterium Christi' (80) and 'The Riddle of the New Testament' (140–142), to the effect that Jesus "merely tests the sincerity of the man's address" and challenges him to recognize his Messiahship, is as far-fetched and unsatisfying as its predecessors.

I do not wish to over-emphasize these features in the record, still less of course to suggest that they are inconsistent with Jesus' intimate and constant communion with God. I submit only that they ought not to be explained away, and that, in view of them, and in view of the scantiness of our information, absolute and miraculous

sinlessness is not an historically suitable form in which to express the nature of his admittedly unique goodness. The late Dr. H. R. Mackintosh truly wrote: "Ultimately, it may be argued, the complete certainty that Jesus never sinned is given by our faith in His person; for there is no way of proving experimentally the impossibility of a fact".[1] In other words, Jesus' sinlessness is not a given fact of history from which we can start.[2]

(*c*) The selection of "sinlessness" as the most significant feature of Jesus' life, and insistence upon it as an absolutely certain and absolutely vital feature, reflects a theological obsession which, as I urged above, seems largely foreign to the view which he himself held regarding mankind, as well as to the realities of the human situation.[3] To say this is, I am aware, to expose myself to the charge of "making light of sin". But the charge, if made, would be unwarranted, for I am under no illusions as to the tragic seriousness of sin. The theologians have supplied no better definition of sin than this: that it is that in us which obstructs our close fellowship with God, or of forgiveness than that in God which effects the removal of the obstruction.[4] Now normal growth, as the emer-

[1] *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 403 n.

[2] Cf. the discussion between the Rev. A. D. Martin and myself in *Congreg. Quart.*, Jan. 1930 (22–27) and Apl. 1930 (253–255, 256).

[3] See above, pp. 46 f..

[4] So in the Archbishops' Committee's Report on *Doctrine in the Ch. of Eng.*, 57, 61, and repeatedly.

gence from the immaturity of childhood, necessarily involves the enlargement and deepening of our fellowship with God—the increase in wisdom and in favour with God spoken of in Luke ii. 52: it therefore necessarily involves the progressive removal of such obstruction as is due to immaturity. Here we have, I suggest, the justification of the wide sense given in Jewish teaching to the concept of sin. To assert that Jesus was exempt from the necessity of such advance is to fly in the face of the Gospel-evidence. To deny that, as a human being, he was so exempt is not to forget the frequently appalling character of the obstruction in the case of *other* men.

(*d*) The idea of sinlessness is at best a negative idea.

"The goodness of Jesus is not to be looked for in the absence of everything in His conduct which may cause hesitation on our part as to its meaning or reason. It lies in the positive victorious love which manifests itself so plainly in the whole tenor of His life. . . ."[1]

"Beside this overwhelming fact" (of salvation through Christ) "our discussions about the infallibility or the sinlessness or the pre-existence of Jesus assume a merely academic interest. The business of Jesus is not to be a source of invariably correct information, nor yet to obtain an unvarying succession of Alpha's when judged by our ethical standards. His business is to be the Saviour of the world by having and imparting that

[1] R. S. Franks in *Congreg. Quart.*, Jan. 1932, 35.

perfect love of God which utterly condemns and yet saves to the uttermost. . . ." [1]

We shall therefore do better justice to the facts before us by concentrating on their positive quality than by making our interpretation of them hinge on a dogmatic negative, the precise meaning of which it has again and again proved impossible to state.

(8) Jesus probably did not utter the bulk of the discourses ascribed to him in the Fourth Gospel.[2] While the Johannine narrative at some points valuably supplements and even corrects the Synoptic story, it is in other respects strangely negligent of the demands of history. Could a personal disciple of Jesus—or even a historically careful narrator—have represented him as publicly claiming and discussing his Messiahship from the very commencement of his ministry, when we know from the Synoptists that he did not even divulge it to the Twelve before Peter's confession at Cæsarea-Philippi and then commanded them to keep it a secret? The Johannine discourses are (*a*) quite different in subject-matter and style from the sayings reported in the Synoptic Gospels, and (*b*) almost exactly similar in both respects to the reflections of the Fourth Evangelist himself. That

[1] T. W. Manson in *Congreg. Quart.*, Apl. 1935, 159 f. Somewhat similarly, the Archbishops' Committee's Report on *Doctrine*, etc., 76 f.

[2] For a general discussion of the Johannine portrait of Jesus, see above, pp. 99–104.

is enough to determine their real character. We may, if we please, argue that they are a helpful interpretation of Jesus' meaning; we may note the full significance of the fact that men wished to ascribe such speeches to him; we may dwell on the unquestionably high Christology of the Synoptists; we may concede the possibility that here and there a real saying or very short discourse of Jesus has been preserved in the Fourth Gospel. But we have no right to quote its discourses indiscriminately as things actually said by Jesus himself, and so as furnishing direct evidence for his self-consciousness. Nothing could be more unsatisfying than the way in which Dr. H. M. Relton, though fully aware of the critical arguments, persuades himself that he is entitled to quote the words of the Johannine Christ as reliable evidence for the thoughts of the real Jesus.[1]

(9) We cannot be in any way sure that Jesus' physical body left the tomb, nor can we think of it as having ascended into the sky. Much of the heat generated in the discussion of this problem would have been avoided, had it been consistently remembered that the narratives arose among Palestinian Jews, who were constitutionally unable to conceive of a person or soul continuing to live after the death of the body, unless the body itself were resuscitated, and for whose minds therefore

[1] *A Study in Christology*, 237–242.

evidence for the former (in the shape of appearances) would automatically constitute evidence for the latter. The historical evidence for the visible appearances of Jesus after the Crucifixion is early, strong, and convincing: the evidence for the emptiness of the tomb is later and (because of its numerous inconsistencies) weaker. In view of the disciples' belief regarding soul and body, and in view of the inconceivability of the Ascension *as narrated in 'Acts' i*, the evidence for the empty tomb is to me quite unconvincing. I am interested to see that, while Dr. Barth (along with other conservatives) insists on the emptiness of the tomb,[1] Dr. Brunner apparently is not prepared to do so.[2] Scholars who retain it usually find themselves driven to some explanation of the Ascension quite inconsistent with the simple narrative in 'Acts' i; and even Barth, most of whose elucidations of the meaning of the Resurrection are extremely obscure, is no exception here.[3]

On the other hand, I agree with those who contend that a psychological explanation of the appearances as purely subjective is not adequate. The facts compel us to believe "that after death Christ became a living spirit, acting directly upon the minds of men, making His presence felt in their lives, directing and shaping the programme of

[1] *Credo*, 100.
[2] Cf. J. K. Mozley in *Expos. Times*, Sept. 1932, 538 ab.
[3] *Credo*, 113, 116.

His Church, using it as His instrument for the conversion of the world" :[1] " . . . only a genuine experience of intercourse with a living person victorious over death can lie behind the original creation of the Christian Church. . . .".[2]

Some feel that even objective visions without the empty tomb would have certified mere survival after death, not triumph over it.[3] But to survive death *is* to triumph over it—particularly to the minds of those who normally assumed that resurrection would follow death only after a long interval of time, during which both soul and body were lifeless.[4]

I have devoted a good deal of space to the enumeration and discussion of these various beliefs about Jesus which I regard as historically untenable, not because I glory in an iconoclastic array of negatives, but because the demands of truth at all costs are paramount, and the elimination of inaccuracies *must* precede any satisfying reconstruction of the history. What then of this positive reconstruction? Of what can we be historically sure?

We can be sure that Jesus lived a life of unbroken, growing, and intimate fellowship with

[1] H. T. Andrews in *The Lord of Life*, 101.
[2] C. C. J. Webb, *The Historical Element in Religion*, 104.
[3] Cf. Selwyn in *Essays Cath. and Crit.*, 314; Hoskyns and Davey, *The Riddle of the N.T.*, 258.
[4] For a fuller statement of the position here adopted, see my booklet, *The Resurrection and Second Advent of Jesus* (Independent Press, 1927).

God, and of unstinted love for man. His ministry was shaped primarily with an eye to the moral and spiritual needs of Israel and the world at that particular juncture in human history; but in being so perfectly adapted to them, it displayed then, and for all time will display, the universal sweep of God's love and the eternal meaning of His will. We stand overawed before the invasive goodness which his life displayed at every turn, his sympathy for the physically and mentally diseased, his desire and power to heal, his eagerness to impart to men the truth about God and to move them to seek Him, his authority to command men and the ability to win them with which his creative goodness invested him, and that numinous quality of being which is the unfailing accompaniment of goodness.[1] In these respects Jesus far outshines the wealth of all other human achievement, and possesses a genuine and essential uniqueness among the sons of God such as is fitly expressed in the title "*the* Son", with which we know he designated himself.[2] Words fail us in which to

[1] I am sorry to have to differ here from Prof. H. H. Farmer, who (in *The Lord of Life*, 286, 291) separates the ethically-sacred from the numinous, and denies that Jesus made a numinous impression on men.

[2] Cf. H. G. Wood, *Christianity and the Nature of History*, 32 ("... To be the Christ, is to fill a position which only one can hold ..."), 155 f. ("... Jesus is no more likely to be surpassed or superseded than Bach or Beethoven, ... progress may depend on recognising that He is final ..."); A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 140 f. ("... The cost of following Jesus can never be so great as the cost of his leading, for he gives the help which he had to find for himself. So that in this respect, in the very nature of things, God's incarnation in him is unique and unrepeatable ...". His goodness "was effective at the

characterize adequately the revolutionary salvation which he wrought for those who were willing to follow him then or have been willing to follow him since, or to express the measure of

> " That love which He enkindles still
> In hearts that Him adore ".

Frustrated by the blindness of Israel in his great effort for Israel's redemption as a people, he faced the worst that man can be called on to face in physical pain and the spiritual agony of despair; and he faced it of set purpose because he loved to the uttermost. In his death at the hands of sinners, men have read the cost of human sin to God, have heard God's loving rebuke, and been moved by it to respond in penitence, and so have been led to receive His forgiveness and be reconciled with Him through His grace.[1] The resur-

turning-point of the world-struggle between good and evil . . ."), 142 (" . . . He is the interpretative centre of all history and of the whole process of the evolution of life "), 156 f. (" . . . he knew himself as the culmination of the past and the key to the future "; hence his acceptance of the title " the Christ "), 158 f. (Jesus' uniqueness bound up with the unique though temporary segregation of Israel); R. A. Edwards in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1936, 447 (not even " the most ardent Platonist would dream of singing, ' Plato, lover of my soul ', . . .").

[1] I would refer here to my small book, *The Message about the Cross* (1924), and my article on ' What does the Crucifixion mean ? ' in *Hibbert Journ.*, Oct. 1933, 70–80. I am in substantial agreement with Dr. R. S. Franks' elucidation of the Abailardian theory in his recent book, *The Atonement* (1934), though I feel that his position needs supplementing and rounding off by greater stress on (1) the suffering brought upon God by human sin, (2) the close dependence of Jesus' suffering on his moral character (through its effect on his enemies), and (3) the presence of the same Divinely-redemptive power in *all* self-sacrificing love as was supremely present in the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. On this last point, cf. W. N. Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*, 359: " Union with Christ delivers a man from that selfish isolation in which the sins and burdens of his human brothers are nothing to him, and *brings him into the fellowship of saviourhood* " (italics mine).

rection-appearances of Jesus gave his followers the assurance that he could not be holden even by the bitter pangs of death, and that, having triumphed over death, he lived on as the Saviour and Lord of as many as would receive him.[1] In the continuance and triumphant progress of his personal domination in the hearts of individuals and through them in the life of society, we see the essential fulfilment of his prediction of a glorious return, though in a form different from that apocalyptic setting which he himself seems to have given to it.[2]

If to any Christian believer these words of mine seem inadequate, I would hasten to add that, though I cannot but discard certain features in the Gospel-story as unhistorical, and though I cannot accept all the formulations in the Creeds

[1] See above, pp. 145–147.

[2] The eschatological teaching of Jesus is too big a problem to be discussed here. New emphasis has recently been placed on it, particularly by Barth and his followers, but not by them alone, as something which at any rate gives the lie to the optimistic Liberal trust in evolutionary progress. Doubtless the eschatology is an historically ineradicable item of Jesus' own presentation of his Gospel: but there is no general agreement as to his precise meaning and the element of ultimate reality to which his teaching corresponds. Dr. C. H. Dodd has rightly drawn attention (in *The Parables of the Kingdom* and *The Apostolic Preaching*) to Jesus' view that in his own person and work the Kingdom of God had already come (cf. Lk. xi. 20 = Mt. xii. 28). I cannot, however, follow him in regarding this truth as virtually disproving the supposition that Jesus expected to reappear and inaugurate a catastrophic triumph of the Kingdom at some date within that generation. The universal Christian belief to this effect, as reflected in the letters of Paul, seems to me decisive against Dr. Dodd's view. As no such cataclysm occurred, one is forced to conclude that Jesus was mistaken as to the *form* which his future triumph would assume (cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 282–284, whose illuminating paragraphs on the problem should be read). But such limitation of his knowledge would not imply that he was misled as regards *the certainty of the fact of his triumph*—the "bringing of many sons unto glory" (Heb. ii. 10); and this after all is the essential thing for Christian believers,

as satisfying, I by no means wish to call in question, or to suspect as being objectively groundless, any of those Christian experiences or affirmations connected with the saving ministry of Christ, which have appealed to men and still appeal to them as spiritually real and helpful in the present. I am far from supposing that my own reading—or any other man's reading—of the historical facts can exhaust the infinite riches of Christ. Allowance must obviously be made for the various ways in which, and various degrees to which, we can apprehend Divine realities. Some, for instance, have been privileged to enjoy a sense of Jesus' personal presence, while others—in whose lives he is equally potent as Saviour—have no such consciousness, at least at first hand.[1] Some will find it natural and right to address their prayers to Jesus himself; others, on the contrary, will feel that they must pray directly to God in his name.[2] Some will picture in vivid concrete forms what they believe their risen Lord to be at the

[1] The words ascribed to Jesus in Mt. xviii. 19 f. and xxviii. 20, having only Matthæan attestation, cannot be confidently regarded as actually spoken by him. But neither that judgment, nor the fact that not all Christians experience a sense of the mystical presence of Christ, proves that the experience itself is illusory. Although no doubt the prevalence of the experience among Christians is often exaggerated to the verge of universality (e.g. by the Rev. R. A. Edwards in *Hibbert Journ.*, July 1935, 535), and although allowance must also be made for the imaginative misinterpretation of the experience (see F. R. Tennant in *Constructive Quarterly*, March 1920, 37), the evidence as a whole cannot be naturally accounted for except on some hypothesis of objective reality (cf. F. C. Bryan in *The Lord of Life*, 248–254). But we do not know enough to be able to explain why this experience comes to some devout Christians, and not to others.

[2] See above, p. 93.

present time personally engaged in doing; others again will confess to a reverent inability to speak so confidently. It is, I think, quite wrong to try to drive a wedge between those who do, and those who do not, "worship" Christ as a Divine being. The horror of according such worship as we give to God to any being not himself fully and actually God dates from the days of the early Christian struggle against pagan polytheism. But it is not the last word. For what is worship? It is reverence for worth. All that is worthy of our reverence, our adoration, our obedience, either is, or in some way embodies and represents, God: and all who love and serve Jesus are *implicitly* worshipping him, whether they explicitly address their prayers to him or not. The only passage in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is represented as referring to the offer of worship to himself (Lk. vi. 46 = Mt. vii. 21) suggests that he was unconcerned about it in comparison with obedience to his teaching. Nor do we need to wait to render him whatever form of worship he evokes from us until we have solved the mystery of the precise metaphysical relation of his Person to that of God the Father.

Having now surveyed and summarized, in however imperfect words, what we may call the data of the problem of the Person of Jesus Christ,

that is, the historical facts regarding his life on earth, and the varied experience of God's salvation which men have had through him, let us ask whether we can frame any working theory of his Person which will synthetize these data. The difficulty of this task lies in our need of somehow unifying the humanity he shares with us and the uniqueness wherein he differs from us. All men, we often say,—at least, all good men—are in some sense Divine; but Jesus is Divine in a unique sense. The traditional Christology failed because, though it admirably safeguarded the unique character of his Divinity, it virtually denied his real humanity. Is it likely we shall do any better?

I believe that, in endeavouring to solve the problem, we have to take seriously what I want to call boldly the Divinity of man. Jesus himself, encouraged his followers to know as *their* Father the God who was *his* Father; while calling himself "*the* Son", he called them "sons" of God (Mt. v. 9, 45; Lk. vi. 35). He taught them to expect aid from that same Holy Spirit with which he was himself endowed. He was made, we are told, in all things like unto his brethren (Heb. ii. 17). Now man is made in God's image. This does not mean that we normally say, even of the best and noblest of men, "He is God"; but (as we have seen) Jesus did not teach men to call him "God", and indeed they did not do so until

years after he had gone from them. In point of fact, as an eminent traditionalist has reminded us, the bald statement, " Jesus is God ", is positively heretical, unless it is made with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. Taken by itself, it savours of Modalistic Monarchianism, Sabellianism, and Swedenborgianism, rather than of Catholic orthodoxy. The traditional doctrine, strictly stated, is not " Jesus is God ", but " Jesus is God Incarnate " —a very radical qualification indeed. On the other hand, cognizance has often been taken of the mysterious presence of God in the lives of individual men. Was Milton speaking inadvisedly when he described Adam and Eve as being formed,

" Hee for God only, shee for God in him " ? [1]

Was Tennyson all wrong when he remembered how he and others, watching his friend Arthur Hallam,

" saw
The God within him light his face " ? [2]

The simplest possible way of describing this immanent indwelling of God is to say that God is in some sense really *in* men.[3] If we can conceive

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iv. 299.

[2] *In Memoriam*. lxxxvii. : cf. xiv (" The man I held as half-divine "), and cxi

(" Nor ever narrowness or spite,
Or villain fancy fleeting by,
Drew in the expression of an eye,
Where God and Nature met in light ").

[3] The notion of God being or abiding *in* the Christian is prominent in 1 John (see iii. 24, iv. 4, 12 f., 15 f. ; cf. iii. 9). As for the vagueness of my phrase " in some sense ", conservative theologians are the last

of God being truly present in every act that is well-pleasing to Him, and still more in every life consecrated to Him, we see the ground for that numinous quality which we instinctively recognize in all such acts and lives. A very familiar hymn tells us the same thing in other words:

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone".[1]

Now there is a striking similarity between the assertion that God is in some sense *in* men and the great Pauline affirmation that "God was *in* Christ reconciling the world unto Himself".[2] The early Church rejected as unorthodox such an identification of Jesus with God as implied that

people in the world who have a right to complain of it; for there is no phrase they are themselves more prone to use when asserting the reality of the personal presence of God in Christ.

[1] Cf. the second-century *Epistle to Diognetus*, x. 6 ("Whoever takes on himself his neighbour's burden, . . . whoever, [by] supplying to those in need what he has himself received from God, becomes [the] God of the receivers [*θεὸς γίνεται τῶν λαμβανόντων*], he is an imitator of God"): Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma* (Eng. trans), i. 119–121, 189 (footnotes demonstrating the wide elasticity of the term *θεός* in the ancient world, and the ease with which it could be applied to human beings); J. V. Bartlet, *A Reasonable Faith* (1929), 29 ("Man is Deity become finite: 'we are' verily 'His offspring' . . ."); A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 62 ("any real goodness reflects, and convinces of, God: it does not need any miracle to attach it to God, for it attaches itself to him by its own implications"), 137 ("... Man's achieved goodness is thus the revelation and assurance of God's goodness . . ."), 167; C. H. Dodd, as quoted above, pp. 25 f. In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* (V. v. 238), when Fenton wants to justify Anne Page for having deceived her parents, his words are: "The offence is *holy* that she hath committed". I have collected some other testimonies to the Divine character of all human goodness in my *Message about the Cross*, 66–69.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 19: cf. John x. 38 ("the Father is in me"), xiv. 10 ("the Father abiding in me"), 11 ("the Father in me").

the Father suffered on the Cross: that suggestion was disallowed as "Patripassianism". But it is noticeable that even conservative modern writers express considerable sympathy for those early Patripassians;[1] and conservatives and modernists meet today on common ground in affirming that the goodness and self-sacrifice of Jesus are, in some real if mysterious sense, the goodness and self-sacrifice of God Himself.[2]

Why, therefore, should we not, tentatively at least, affirm that "God's Presence and His very Self"—the Presence and Self manifested with unique clarity and fullness in the overwhelming goodness of Jesus—is after the same fashion

[1] Cf. B. J. Kidd, *Hist. of the Church to A.D. 461*, i. 364 ("... its [i.e. Patripassianism's] devotion to the cardinal truth of the Gospel that God died for us upon the cross ..."), 366 ("... the sufferings which won our salvation did so because they were the sufferings of God Himself ..."); and H. M. Relton, *A Study in Christology*, 57 ("... Nevertheless the Patripassians, however defective their theories from another point of view, came very near to one great truth the Incarnation was meant to teach, viz. that in Christ, God did enter into so intimate a fellowship with our human nature as to share the distress of our finitude and the sufferings which fall to the lot of our creaturely existence").

[2] W. Temple in *Foundations*, 249 ("The Human Affections of Christ are God's Affections; His Suffering is God's; His Love is God's; His Glory is God's"); D. Miall Edwards in *The Lord of Life*, 230 (quoting Temple, as here quoted); A. T. Cadoux, *A New Orthodoxy*, etc., 129 ("Human goodness, especially as we know it in Jesus, is not a mere reflection and response of the undivine to the goodness of God: it is the eternal outgoing of God in creation coming to know itself by recognizing the God whose outgoing it is, ..."), 130 (Jesus' death "was the culminating act of intense and unreserved love, commending itself to us as the measure and evidence, and indeed as the very act, of God's love"), 138 ("... we cannot regard Jesus merely as reflecting God: he is both the greatest achievement of God and the greatest means to God's achievement ..."), 170 ("If man's being is thus of the outgoing and self-giving of God, then, if his will is one with God's will, he will be wholly divine, and in a sense more divine than any other being in the universe whether named God or not. ... That man in whom we find God as nowhere else in the universe is Jesus: ...")

though with less clarity and fullness manifested in those in whom Jesus himself has called forth a longing to follow him.[1] This likeness of Jesus to his followers, conjoined to his difference from them, is strikingly set forth by Paul when he calls him " the firstborn among many brothers " (Rom. viii. 29). The firstborn in a numerous family holds a position of very real uniqueness, while being at the same time one in a group of similar individuals. Like the traditional Creed, this formula, " the firstborn among many brothers ", safeguards the unique Divinity of Christ and the qualities wherein he stands apart from all men. *Unlike* the traditional Creed, it safeguards also his humanity, and the things wherein he is one of us. If anyone fears that such a view may not leave room for his Saviourhood, he is mistaken. And if anyone shall

[1] Cf. M. Spencer in *The Lord of Life*, 315 (" The Divinity which was native in Christ is present in germ also in us, who are made in God's image . . ."); F. L. Cross in *Hibbert Journ.*, Apl. 1932, 468–479, esp. 471 f. (pleads that in Jesus we have " the one instance of perfect and complete Incarnation ", lower degrees of Incarnation being seen in nature and in man).

It is sometimes asked, " How are we to account for the fact that Jesus alone of all human beings was able to realize the moral ideal? If that realization were solely the result of consecrated effort, why should no one else ever have attained to it? Surely his unique attainment implies a unique endowment, over and above his own personal effort". It must certainly be admitted that equal amounts of effort or good intention in different men often seem to produce very different degrees of spiritual stature and quality. At the same time we cannot (except on that Augustinian and deterministic theory which reduces man to a robot) regard stature and quality as independent of effort and intention. See the discussion of this aspect of the problem by F. R. Tennant in *The Constructive Quarterly*, Sept. 1920, 466–483. And in any case it is not clear that the appeal to special endowment in the case of Jesus—corresponding to his special vocation as the Christ—would necessitate a Chalcedonian theory of his Person.

have said that to rest content with such a formula as this is virtually to deny our Lord's Divinity and to abandon the Christian Gospel, let him be anathema!

The Christology I have sketched obviously falls far short of the degree of precision attempted in the traditional Creeds. It leaves unanswered several great questions we should all like to see answered. But I count that modesty an advantage rather than a defect. For while it is right that we should ask, and seek, and think, it is also right that we should recognize our limitations. In an oft-quoted passage, Hilary of Poitiers regretted that the wickedness of heretics and blasphemers compelled the Church to do what otherwise would have been unallowable, namely, to speculate concerning the impenetrable mysteries of the Divine Being—"to do what is illegitimate, to climb the steeps, to utter the unspeakable, to take liberties not granted to us".[1] His admission has many parallels in patristic literature. Perhaps the most striking of them is Augustine's cautious observation, which Dr. H. R. Mackintosh wisely stated "it is rash to neglect": [2] "Nevertheless the expression is used, 'Three Persons', not in order that that expression may be used, but lest there should be complete

[1] I have quoted the whole passage in Latin in *Catholicism and Christianity*, 89, n. 1. It comes from *De Trinitate*, ii. 2.
[2] *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 452.

silence ".[1] We may recall also Tertullian's blustering and defiant expressions: "And God's Son died: it is absolutely credible, because it is absurd. And he was buried and rose again: it is certain, because it is impossible ".[2] But if those mysteries are really impenetrable, if human language is really incapable of exact speech about God, if we need the warning

> "Measure not with words
> Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the string of thought
> Into the Fathomless ",

why frame precise and compulsory formulæ about God and Christ as if it were not so? Surely these confessions of Hilary and Augustine mean that it is strictly ultra vires for us, not indeed to ponder and speculate concerning God's Nature, but to rely so completely on our cut-and-dried conclusions about Him that we can safely excommunicate those of our fellow-disciples who cannot accept them. It is surely an altogether safer and wiser plan to be content with less precision than our fathers were, always provided that the Divine Saviourhood of Jesus Christ is acknowledged and proclaimed.[3]

[1] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, v. 10 ("Dictum est tamen 'Tres Personae', non ut illud diceretur, sed ne taceretur"), cf. vii. 7, 9.

[2] Tertull., *De Carne Christi*, 5.

[3] After quoting Hilary and Augustine, Wilhelm Herrmann remarks: ". . . our opponents . . . must surely doubt their right to denounce our abandonment of that sort of speculation, as though we were shirking the highest problems and robbing Christianity of all its meaning, when these very speculations were so condemned by their own classic authorities" (*Communion with God* [1895], 135 n.). A writer in *Times Lit.*

From another angle my suggestion is likely to be rejected as "pantheistic". This is a criticism of the sort of which I complained at the beginning of my first chapter—I mean, the attempt to dismiss a position by attaching to it a discreditable label. The reason for objecting to the criticism in this case as unfair is that the word "pantheism" may be used to designate a number of widely-differing views, not all of which are wrong. Strict pantheism is the absolute identification of God with the world, a view which, if not crassly materialistic, at least leaves no room for any distinction between good and evil. Can any man seriously describe the view I have advocated as being pantheistic in that sense? But if by pantheism you really mean a recognition of the immanence of God in the world and in human life (a recognition which in no way involves me in denying or ignoring His transcendence), why may I not *in that sense* be a pantheist?

Supplt. for 13th March, 1937 (180) says of Baron von Hügel: ". . . He himself mistrusted the passion for systematization: 'from the outset we must rid ourselves of all system-mongers'. This mistrust sprang from his sense of the richness of life, the great variety of elements to be brought together in thought: . . ." (cf. the similar remarks, with qualifying warnings against intellectual laziness, in *Times Lit. Supplt.* 4th April 1935, 220). It is, of course, a standing principle in Roman Catholic teaching that all human statements concerning the being and nature of God must necessarily be either negative or analogical.

There is moreover no slight spiritual danger in pressing metaphysical conclusions regarding the Divine Nature. Thus Friedrich Heiler writes: "Die Trias: Vater, Sohn und Geist, die ursprünglich ein Ausdruck der lebendigen Heilserfahrung war, ist zur dogmatischen Formel einer gnostischen Metaphysik geworden, welche—trotz allen Redens von Offenbarungsgeheimnissen—den Sinn für das göttliche Mysterium verloren hat" (*Der Katholizismus*, 362).

"To emphasize immanence, so long as transcendence is recognized, is not to be regarded as an acceptance of pantheism. . . . Tennyson's *The Higher Pantheism* is misnamed, as the poet's exhortation to personal communion with God shows: . . . There is much pantheism which is not consistent—a tendency rather than a system; and it has some value as a corrective of a crude anthropomorphism, or hard deism, and as an emphasis, if exaggerated, on God's affinity with and immanence in man. . . ."[1]

Let those who cry out against an immanental theory of the Divinity of Christ as pantheistic take good heed to themselves, lest they be found—in company with the blasphemers—implicitly denying the immanent omnipresence of Him in Whom we live and move and have our being.[2]

A more serious criticism comes from those many to whom the Incarnation of God in Christ seems to differ toto caelo from the immanent Indwelling of God in good men, and who can see no "Gospel" in any Christology that is not incarn-

[1] Garvie in Hastings' *Encyclop. of Relig. and Eth.*, ix. 612 f.

[2] A learned Barthian friend suggests in a private letter that I am confusing the issue in not clearly distinguishing between the cosmological immanence of God (whereof His psychological immanence—as the cause of our mental states—is a variety) from what he calls God's "epistemological immanence" (whereby He enters upon personal and religious relationships with us): indeed, he would prefer to describe the latter by saying that God is present *to* or *for* our experience rather than immanent in it. The cosmological immanence excludes, he contends, personal relationships. I do not deny that such a distinction may rightly be pointed out and investigated: only I doubt whether we possess the intellectual capacity to affirm positively that they present us with things mutually exclusive. At all events, I am provisionally content to believe, without pretending to be able to explain it analytically, that man's personal relationship to God is a phase of the Divine indwelling in him.

ational in a non-immanental sense. Perhaps the most striking of such protests is the elaborate figure drawn by Dr. Brunner of all mankind as an advancing army, whereof the vanguard is a sharp-pointed wedge formed by the sages, prophets, saints, and heroes of the human race; coming to meet them from above is a point of light to which they look for salvation. "He is the Saviour! This picture may help us to understand what Christianity means by saying: Jesus the Christ, the Word that has become flesh. . . ." [1] I cannot but decline to accept this picture as a helpful elucidation of the truth, for the simple reason that it blandly leaves out all acknowledgment of our Saviour's humanity. For the religious concern behind the general criticism I feel profound respect: yet after having with reverent emphasis subscribed to the declaration that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, I do not know how else I can allay it. The criticism seems to me to assume that the very term "Incarnation" constitutes a philosophical solution of the problem of the Divinity of Jesus, instead of being, what it actually is, an alternative way of saying that God was in Christ. It seems to me that more allowance needs to be made by traditionalist theologians for the

[1] *The Word and the World* (1931), 46 f.; cf. 39–41, 48, 53, etc. Incidentally, Brunner makes great play (44 f.) with the assertion that Jesus is "more than a prophet", possibly forgetting that that phrase is not used in Scripture of Jesus himself, but by Jesus of John the Baptist.

fact that the same item of objective spiritual truth must needs be conveyed in very different thought-vehicles at different times and by and for different minds. Whenever in conversation I press my traditionalist friends to tell me how incarnate Deity differs from immanent Deity, their answer (if forthcoming at all) usually takes one of two forms. Either they tell me that Jesus treated men and spoke to them as if he were himself God—a statement clearly contrary to historical fact, and sure furthermore to lead on to a virtual denial of his humanity—or else they adduce the rightness of the practice of "worshipping" Jesus, a practice which I have already argued is, when properly understood, fully congruous with a Christology that insists on the reality of God's presence in him, after the same manner in which He is present in all good men, but refrains from more detailed speculation as to the precise metaphysical basis of the uniqueness which characterizes it in his case.

It does not follow from such a Christology as I have advocated that the Christian notion of a redemptive approach of God to man, as the essential counterpart of man's upward striving towards God, is in any way forgotten or ignored. The idea that it is excluded is largely due to the loose and altogether unwarranted use of the word "mere". Theological writers make great play with such phrases as "mere man", "a mere prophet",

" mere martyrdom ", " merely a glorious human development ", etc., forgetting apparently that each such term has implications which render the characterization of it as " mere " illegitimate. If we believe in the Fatherhood of God (a belief most strangely spoken of by some as if it were not at the very heart of the Christian message as Jesus himself presented it), we have no more right to speak of " mere moral influence " or " mere martyrdom " than of " mere atonement ", to speak of " mere immanence " than " mere incarnation ", of " mere man " than of " mere Son of God ".[1]

I would like to quote here a few sentences from Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson's recent book, ' The Veil of God '. " The only way ", he says,

" for the modern man earnestly seeking the confirmation of his faith in Jesus and not blind to all the difficulties of the day . . . is to face Jesus in His humanity and resolutely to seek God in and through the human values of the personality of Jesus. . . . Perhaps the most helpful thought may be to ask ourselves the question : ' What other expression of the Godhead could there be than through such a humanity as this ? ' . . . What difference in *fact* can there be between the divine self-emptying in becoming human and that perfection of our humanity which we more readily see in Jesus ? . . . But it may be asked, does not this line of approach to the Incarnation rob

[1] A curious example of the dualism implied by this free use of the word " mere " is the allusion of the late Sir E. Hoskyns and Mr. Davey to the error of interpreting the New Testament " in terms of a humanitarian ethic or of a humanitarian spiritual experience " (*The Riddle of the N.T.*, 46). What on earth, I ask, are these ?

it of its uniqueness? Do we not feel something at least of the same stirrings of heart in regard to the person of Jeremiah under the old covenant and of Francis of Assisi under the new? Is not all noble achievement in humanity a revelation of God? The answer to this question ought to be an emphatic 'Yes'. It is the glory of this manner of God's utterance that it was both prepared for and continued; prepared for not only in the history of Israel, but in that of all the peoples, and continued not only in those who bear the name of Christ, but in all who may serve unconscious of their service. There is no need for us to put our little ring fence around Jesus lest He should be dishonoured by the many brethren of whom He is the firstborn. The only uniqueness for which we need contend is that which can take care of itself and does take care of itself, which grows upon us according to the degree of our devotion, and which has for its sufficient witness the fact that Jesus still remains ahead of us and of all the generations".[1]

For many Christians today, the light in which they greatly prefer to view the Incarnation is as a mighty and irruptive act of God intervening in, or invading, human history with a view to man's salvation. In the same way they like to picture Jesus as being in the first place a "victor". I

[1] H. W. Robinson, *The Veil of God* (1936), 46–48. Cf. John Baillie, *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity* (1929), 194: "We wonder again whether we are prepared to say that God's presence in Christ was so wholly different in principle from His presence in other human hearts as this clear-cut distinction between the persons of the Son and the Spirit seems to make it—whether the Incarnation was a fact quite so unrelated to the rest of our experience as this explanation would make it appear. We wonder, once more, whether we do not want to believe that it was the Father Himself who came near to us in Jesus of Nazareth—the Father Himself rather than the second person of a Trinity to which the Father also belonged".

should not of course wish to exclude the category of " power " from our understanding of the saving activity of God; nor would I presume to deny the possibility of an irruption or invasion on His part. But I would observe (1) that the category of power, unless carefully qualified, savours of mechanical compulsion rather than of " a gracious personal relationship " (to use Dr. Oman's historic phrase); and (2) the idea of a Divine irruption, unless carefully qualified, implies that prior to this irruption God was not doing His best and utmost for the salvation of men. Such an implication is to be warded off at all costs; for if God be truly revealed in Christ, He must be eternally working to the limit of His power in every set of circumstances for the redemption of His children—and of *all* His children, not the elect only (as Augustinianism and Calvinism would have us believe): the most ordinary human father would do as much as that; and is it to be suggested that God's love is less generous than his?

My insistence on the real humanity of Jesus will doubtless bring down on my devoted head the charge of " Unitarianism ". Once again we have the old trick of the ambiguous and question-begging label made to do duty for serious argument; and once again I am constrained to deny the soft impeachment. The simplest meaning of the word " Unitarian " is: " one who denies the

doctrine of the Trinity". That doctrine I have not denied, and do not deny. I confess I feel certain difficulties about it—as who does not? I am not content to give the word "Person" a meaning akin to "phase" or "aspect" in one context (viz. when applied to the three constituent beings in the Trinity), while in another (viz. when applied to God as Father or to Jesus Christ) it is being used in the modern sense familiar to us today. And I gravely doubt the ability of any man to know or explain the real difference between being created by God (as the world is), being begotten by God (as the Son is), and proceeding from God (as the Spirit does). The reader may judge for himself how near the refinements of the traditional doctrine come to unreality and unintelligibility by conning the following phrases from Dr. B. J. Kidd's 'History of the Church to A.D. 461', à propos of the Christology of Dionysius of Alexandria (in the middle of third century A.D.): "Dionysius . . . failed to perceive that such figures" (as that of parent and child) "reach only to the generic, and not to the essential oneness of the Godhead" (i. 492). "The Son . . . 'has life IN Himself', but not, like the Father, OF Himself, as well" (i. 493 n. 2). Dionysius "had spoken of the Son as a 'work', but never as a 'creature', of the Father" (i. 494, where a note gives the two Greek words as *ποίημα* and *κτίσμα* respectively).

Nor do I think the patristic distinction between Father and Spirit corresponds with sufficient closeness to that distinction between God transcendent and God immanent which alone seems to me valid.[1] But to acknowledge that one is dissatisfied with the doctrine of the Trinity, as a theological synthesis of the data, is not to deny it. I recognize that it was a solemn attempt—the best within the capacity of those who made it—to give expression to certain great verities and realities; and if it goes to a point of precision beyond what I feel to be legitimate for my own mind, I venerate it nonetheless as the vehicle in which certain aspects of God's saving truth have been preserved and conveyed.

After appealing for "stress on the Unity of God rather than on the distinction of the Persons" (which latter stress tends towards Tritheism), Principal R. S. Franks continues:

"Let us tentatively define the Word of God as that substantial mode of God's Being in which He is revealed to us, and the Spirit of God as that equally substantial mode of His Being by which He dwells in us, both modes of the Divine Being being as Eternal as God is, and Personal as they share in the Divine Personality. If, then, the human personality of Jesus was indwelt

[1] For a simple and sympathetic elucidation of the traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit, cf. Dale, *Christian Doctrine*, 124–147, especially 138–144. Per contra, cf. John Baillie, *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, 193 f. ("... We wonder whether we are after all prepared to distinguish between God the Father and God the Spirit in this or in any formal way").

Personally by God so completely that God's Personal Revelation became one with Christ's humanity, we can say that the Incarnation consists of the unification of the Eternal Word with Jesus through the Eternal Spirit. That is the Divine side of what has previously been expressed from the side of Christ's human personality. . . ." [1]

It is curious how often, when the attempt is made by insistent Trinitarians to state precisely wherein lies the essential truth and religious value of the doctrine of the Trinity, that truth and value turn out to be something much simpler and more intelligible than the doctrine itself—something which many who stumble at the doctrine itself could readily accept. No doubt it would be urged that the doctrine is logically *implied* in that something: but the distinction surely shows that the doctrine cannot itself be the great sine quâ non.

So to think and speak of the doctrine of the Trinity cannot reasonably be designated "Unitarianism", even though many Unitarians might be found who would share it.[2] Still less is my position Unitarian in the sense of being uncommitted (as Unitarianism officially is) in regard to

[1] In *Congreg. Quart.*, Jan. 1932, 37 f.: cf. the same writer's fuller statement in *Congreg. Quart.*, Oct. 1929, 549–556.

[2] In the opinion of many, such a possibility would itself suffice to discredit my case. Cf., e.g., O. C. Quick, *Liberalism, Modernism and Tradition* (1922), 10: "Now, however much we may be attracted by this line of argument, it is obviously very difficult to find anything in it to which a Unitarian could in principle object". Yet it would surely be perverse to reject a position simply on the ground that so-and-so could probably accept it!

the centrality and Lordship of Christ, and even in regard to the existence of a personal God. The fact is that there are Unitarians and Unitarians. The real cleavage for Christian people is not that between those who do and those who do not believe that God exists in Three Persons, but that between those who do and those who do not put Christ in the centre of their religion. Dr. T. Rhondda Williams, in his recently published autobiography, tells the following story:

"When once I went from Bradford to preach at the English Congregational church at Morriston, an old deacon, who knew me in my Welsh ministry, said: 'I hear dreadful things about you; they tell me you are a Unitarian'. I told him I thought 'the only thing to save us from idolatry was to worship Christ as the image of God'. 'Oh, well', he said, 'that is splendid. They have wronged you'. 'You do not know', I said, 'that the words I have used are based on a passage of Dr. Martineau's, the Unitarian. You will find it in his "Endeavours after the Christian Life", . . .'"[1]

A friend who read my MS. in its unfinished state tells me he cannot see where my theory of the Incarnation differs from that of the Adoptionists;

[1] *How I found my Faith*, 66. Martineau's exact words are: "Nor is there any security against this devotion to idols of the mind, except that which Heaven itself has furnished to all Christendom; the reverential acceptance of Christ as the highest Image of the invisible God, the complete and finished representation of his moral perfections" (*Endeavours*, etc., 261). Yet the whole context of the passage (260–262) is concerned with the right and wrong objects of "worship": there was therefore in substance no misleading of the church-official, and no misrepresentation of Martineau, in the way in which Dr. Williams paraphrased the latter's words in quoting him from memory.

and I am interested to see that " H. M. H.", when reviewing, in ' The Review of the Churches ' for Jan. 1930, the book so often quoted in these pages with grateful concurrence, ' The Lord of Life', remarked of its Christology: " We are bound to say that this theory seems to us to be a form of Adoptionism, in modern dress ". Now the mere fact that Adoptionism is one of the various early theories recognized by traditionalists as heretical would not of itself necessarily mean that one must labour at all costs to disown it. Nevertheless, the charge happens in this case to be erroneous. Adoptionism (as the term is commonly used) means the view that Jesus started by being " a mere man " (*ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος*), but lived such a godly life that he was eventually " adopted "—or taken over—as Son of God. The critic will be hard put to it to discover any advocacy of this view in the foregoing pages. Indeed, had not the incriminating word " Adoptionist " been already lying near at hand as a convenient weapon of chastisement, I cannot imagine that it would ever have occurred to anyone to choose it as a description of my view. I do not doubt that points of resemblance between my view and Adoptionism might be discovered: but to urge this is to urge nothing significant, for every conceivable Christology displays at least *some* points of resemblance to some other Christology which is unsatisfactory.

Adoptionism has the merit (which cannot be claimed for Chalcedonianism) of having taken the humanity of our Lord seriously; and its idea of a progressive perfecting of his moral personality through the testing experiences of his ministry is amply borne out by scripture itself (see Hebs. ii. 10, v. 7–9).[1] But I disagree with its supposition that there was once a time in the life of Jesus when he was not Son of God in a unique sense. In regard, however, to any pre-existent life of the human Jesus I refrain, for reasons already made clear, from speculating. The Trinitarian assertion of the existence from all eternity of "God the Son" who became incarnate in the human Jesus I accept as a method of affirming that the forthgoing Divine life manifestly present in him for the salvation of us men was as Divine and eternal as that of the Father Himself. But we are speaking here of mysteries beyond human ken; and I wish only to make it plain that immanental Christology (if I may call mine so) is not Adoptionism, and that it does not ignore or omit that vital Christian belief for which more traditionalist language is often asserted to be the only sufficient safeguard.

The question has been asked whether the Evangelical Modernist view of the relation of Christian faith

[1] Cf. B. J. Kidd, *Hist. of the Church to A.D. 461*, i. 502: ". . . there is something morally fine and noble about the system of Paul (of Samosata), because of the value which he attached to personal effort and the power of the will".

to truth and to history, and in particular the Evangelical Modernist view of Jesus Christ, can furnish forth a Gospel for sinful and suffering humanity. A negative answer to this question is confidently given in many quarters. Yet a candid survey of the facts does not bear out this negative. The prevalent neglect of public worship and the rampant paganism of our time are often adduced as the obvious results of our having strayed from the right path. But the evils might with just as much show of reason be laid at the door of traditionalism, as the inevitable result of traditionalists' having failed to move with the times. As a matter of fact, both answers would be largely unwarranted. Controversialists forget that, even if an angel from heaven were to proclaim the quintessence of saving truth, nothing would prevent certain men spurning it if they wished to. To complain of Liberalism for not having saved us from the Great War and the present ghastly world-situation is therefore simply silly. If we turn to the positive fruitfulness of the Christian message in the lives of those who have been willing to accept it, it is impossible to pretend that Evangelical Modernism has been barren. So far as ability to win others is concerned, probably the personal character and persuasive power of the preacher has more to do with securing results than the particular thought-forms in which he clothes his

message.[1] That does not mean that the thought-forms do not matter: but it does mean that the Gospel of the redeeming grace of God in Christ can be as efficiently conveyed to men in Evangelical Modernist, as in traditional, terms.

Nothing, as I have said, can prevent the individual man loving spiritual darkness rather than light if he is disposed to do so: yet on a long view, and with an eye to the infinity and eternity of God's goodness, we judge that men must ultimately of their own choice turn to the light. There we have a real warrant for our faith in human progress, a faith much decried today, but, on full reflection, seemingly involved in our belief in the goodness of God. And faith in progress strongly reinforces our trust in truth. Without being able to see clearly all we aspire to see, we can take it for granted that love for truth and love for God can never lead us astray along divergent paths.

[1] Cf. Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural* (ed. 1861), 404 f.

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Figures in heavy type represent passages in the Biblical books quoted.