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**THE DOCTRINES OF THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH**

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DOCTRINES OF THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH

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PRINCIPAL, NEW COLLEGE, LONDON



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PREFACE

It is not easy in these days to write on the Doctrines of the Christian Faith. The old infallibilities are gone, and Biblical Scholarship seems to many to have made insecure the foundations on which in the past theology has been built. Yet so long as there is Christian preaching there must be Christian theology, for theology has for its task the exploration of that message which it is the preacher's privilege to proclaim.

The Christian message presents many problems. Yet it is not primarily an addition to our problems. It is Good News of God, a revelation of the character of God in which is to be found the answer to those questions which are every man's concern. It is this conviction which has led to the writing of this book. It has been written in the hope that it may help some to a conception of Christianity less vulnerable than many of its older presentations, and yet as truly a gospel to be preached.

This book is concerned not with the past but with the present. Yet it has not been possible to leave undiscussed those classic statements of Christian truth which still influence the Church's thought. The history of a doctrine is its best exposition, and we can learn from the past both what to avoid and what to follow.

THESE words from the Preface to its first edition express the scope and purpose of this book. Based on lectures given to students of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, of which the writer was then the President, much of its material had been used in lectures to ministers at Summer Schools, whilst it contains the substance of the Carew Lectures on *Theology and Preaching* given in 1929 at Hartford Theological Seminary, Conn., U.S.A., to whose President, the late Dr. W. Douglas Mackenzie, it was dedicated. In its preparation the writer owed much to the helpful criticisms of two of his friends at Cambridge, now no longer living : the Rev. Dr. H. Maldwyn Hughes, the Principal of Wesley House, and Mr. Bernard Lord Manning, Senior Tutor of Jesus College.

Published in 1931, its first impression was exhausted in a few months and a second impression appeared in the following year. The writer is very grateful to Mr. Bernard Honess, the Manager of the Independent Press for arranging for the purchase of the copyright from the original Publishers and thus making possible this reissue.

This new impression is to be produced by photolithography and, apart from the alteration of a few words on pp. 227 and 228, corrections are confined to the elimination of misprints and the amendment of some erroneous references. Since this book first appeared, some of the contents of this book have received far more detailed treatment in the writer's *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London Theological Library, 1937) and in *The Christian Estimate of Man* (Duckworth, 1943), whilst in his recent

book, *The Christian Way, A Study of New Testament Ethics in Relation to Modern Needs* (Nisbet, 1949) he has sought to show the relevance of the Christian Message to our modern needs. But he believes that this short and simply written statement of Christian Theology may still be of use, explaining, as it does, what seems to the writer to be the true method of approach to Theology and using that method in the explication of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian Faith.

Though the writer feels no need to rewrite this book, were he doing so there would naturally be some difference of phraseology. Thus references to the Great War are to the War of 1914-1918 for, when this book was written, we did not know that that war would be so soon followed by another. Brunner's great book *Der Mittler* and Barth's *Commentary on Romans* are now available in English translation and references would now be given to Miss Olive Wyon's translation, *The Mediator* and to Sir Edwyn C. Hoskyns' translation, *The Epistle to the Romans*. We should not now speak (p. 260) of Brunner as "the chief theologian of the Barthian school": in recent years the differences between Barth and Brunner have been more emphasized than their agreement and the controversy between them has become the centre of interest in Continental Protestant theology. The reference on the same page to Barth's *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* is to the first volume of his *Christian Dogmatics* published in 1927. Barth later realized the immaturity of that book, and, writing at much greater length, published in 1932 the first part of volume one of his *Church Dogmatics*, and this first part is now avail-

able in English in Professor G. T. Thomson's translation, *The Doctrine of the Work of God*. In the second part of this first volume and in the six other parts already published, Barth has modified his earlier statements and has spoken with a new confidence of the love of God to men and of the possibility of knowing Him in our response of faith. These seven immense parts of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* are as yet untranslated, and, in consequence, in this country his earlier teaching, in its passionate one-sidedness, is better known; it is to this earlier teaching that this book refers.

The grave events of recent years have led to a revival of interest in Christian Doctrine and this book is reissued in the hope that it may prove of use to those who for their own sake or for the sake of their work as preachers or as teachers desire a concise and comprehensive statement of the Christian Message.

NEW COLLEGE, LONDON,

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I

INTRODUCTION

(i) THEOLOGY AND PREACHING

IN a famous passage St. Paul declares that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." In this, our English version, his words appear to be a tribute to the preacher's art. That was not his meaning. The word translated "preaching," *kerugma*, denotes not the delivery of sermons but "the thing preached," that Word of the Gospel, which it was his life-task to proclaim. It is this *kerugma*, this Word of the Gospel, which it is the function of theology to explore and to express.

To many in our modern world, theology seems not the exposition of a gospel but the imposition of a tyranny from which they are glad to have escaped. Both within and without the Church, theology is often regarded as a dingy relic of an outworn past, and the theologian is despised as a tedious pedant, out of touch with reality, and having nothing relevant to say to an age distinguished by the advance of science.

It has to be confessed that theologians have been in part to blame for the contempt in which theology is at present held. When theology was esteemed as "the Queen of Sciences," it was often jealous

and intolerant, and was unwilling to recognize the rights of younger claimants to men's attention. The classic theologies of the past were far more than expositions of God's saving work in Christ ; they were massive systems which demanded assent to world-views which later science was to make obsolete. In consequence, the history of theology has for long presented the appearance of a continuous succession of retreats.

Thus few to-day have studied sufficiently the systems of the medieval Schoolmen to realize the consummate skill with which the greatest of them wove into one whole the best knowledge of their age. What men remember is the action of the Inquisition in forbidding Galileo to declare that it was the earth, and not the sun, that moved. Science later was to show that the sun also moved. But, in his time, Galileo's discovery marked a real advance, and the attempt to suppress his teaching is neither forgotten nor forgiven.

Nor did the Reformation end the reign of tyrannous conservatism. Luther, indeed, protested against the excessive speculations of the Schoolmen, and, whilst still an obedient monk, warned his students against "wasting precious time on the what and the why of things," and bade them, instead, "learn Jesus Christ and Him crucified."¹ In the great first years of the Reformation, Luther in moving words depicted Christ as "the mirror

¹ *Schol. on Rom. viii. 19* (from the lectures given in 1515, two years before that attack on Indulgences which marked the beginning of the Reformation).

of the Father's heart," through whom alone we can recognize "the Father's grace and mercy,"¹ whilst Melancthon taught that "it is useless to labour long on the high doctrines of God: His Unity and Trinity, the mystery of creation, the mode of the Incarnation." "To know Christ is to know His benefits, not as they (the Schoolmen) teach, to contemplate His natures, and the modes of His Incarnation."² But this concentration on the essential meaning of Christianity was soon abandoned. Luther himself relapsed into explanations of Christ's person as remote from the interests of Christian faith and as subtle as any in the scholasticism he had attacked. By the theologians of Lutheranism, Christianity was once more intellectualized; assent was demanded to a vast congeries of speculations, and the Christian message was thus again entangled with world-views which later ages were to outgrow.

Nor was Calvin's contribution entirely gain. With a lucidity alien from Luther's paradoxical and often violent speech, Calvin sought to exhibit the doctrines of Christianity as a transcript of the teaching of the Bible. To the authority claimed by the Roman Church he opposed the infallible authority of God's written word, and later theologians of his School asserted with increasing extrava-

¹ *The Larger Catechism*. Luther's *Primary Works*, etc., E.T.², by Wace and Buchheim, p. 106.

² From the first edition of the *Loci Communes*, edited by Plitt-Kolde³, pp. 61 and 63. These famous words were omitted by Melancthon in later editions.

gance the absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures. But the Scriptures contain, not only the record of God's partial revelation of Himself to Jewish prophets, and His perfect revelation of His holy love in Christ, but views about the world's creation which belong to the folklore of the Jewish people. When historical criticism showed the impossibility of believing in the Bible's verbal inspiration, and when natural science revealed the contradictions between its findings and the Biblical accounts of the creation of the world and the origin of man, Protestant theologians, in general, treated these discoveries as attacks on faith. Whereas in science the recognition of new facts, which require the abandonment of an old hypothesis, and the substitution of a more adequate hypothesis, is regarded as an advance, in theology the enforced recognition of new facts has been too often treated as a defeat. Theologians have had to shift their ground, but they have done so with such reluctance and tardiness as to convey the impression that they have been fighting all the time a losing battle.¹

Not even in the sphere of ethics has theology retained the respect of the modern world. Harsh doctrines of eternal torment continued to be taught, even when they had become morally offensive to men who had learnt humaner views of punishment. In spite of some great and notable exceptions, the official theologians of the Church

¹ For illustrations see Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, pp. 224-39.

showed little interest in the social problems created by the Industrial Revolution. At a time when material needs were keenly felt it is not surprising that many should have turned in weariness from teachings which seemed to have little relevance to the world in which men work and suffer.

“The primary religious virtue is sincerity, a penetrating sincerity.”¹ No theology can be truly religious which is not thus sincere. If Christian teachers are to regain their influence, they need to be as ready as are scientists to recognize new facts, even although new facts involve the discarding of old theories. Nobly did Tertullian write, “Christ called Himself truth, not custom.”² A theology which clings timorously to outworn words is contrary to His spirit, whilst a theology whose chief interest is in recondite speculation is ill-adapted to express a gospel which is every man’s concern.

We need to learn the lessons of the past. We cannot, indeed, join in the scornful criticisms often brought against the theological systems of an earlier age. It is only possible to jeer at a St. Thomas Aquinas or a Calvin as we leave unread their writings, and ignore the circumstances of their time. In the Middle Ages, the dominance of the Church was necessary to preserve a civilization threatened, on the one side, by barbarism, and, on the other, by Muslim armies. At such a period authority was

¹ Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 5.

² *On the Veiling of Virgins*, i. The phrase is more liberal than its context.

even more necessary than freedom, and the relapse of Christianity into legalism helped to conserve the Christian heritage. St. Thomas's vast system was the natural expression of the theology of a Church which claimed to bring all knowledge within its rule. Luther's great liberating word could not be fully understood amid the confusion and the turmoil which followed the beginnings of the Reformation, and Protestantism was driven by the necessities of its environment to turn from his grand intuition to the quest for an infallible authority, such as Calvin discovered for it in the Bible. It was not unnatural that in later ages men should have been reluctant to abandon the infallible authority which secured for them, as they believed, the safety that they sought. It needs courage to abandon the known for the unknown, and it is not surprising that, when the grave issues of religion seemed to be at stake, such courage was often lacking. Men refused to recognize new facts, because the new facts revealed the fallibility of the authority on which they had relied.

For us the old infallibilities have gone. We can no longer base our faith on an infallible Church or Book. Yet the *kerugma*, the Word of the Gospel, still remains. So long as there is a Christian Church, so long there must be a Christian theology, for Christian theology has for its task the exploration and expression of that Christian message which the preacher is set apart to proclaim.

No theology, however free from obscurantism or

from arrogance, can thus be other than an offence to many in the modern world. Only where there is the recognition of the unique significance of the Christian Gospel can Christian theology be regarded as a legitimate branch of knowledge. If theology had nothing to offer but human speculations, then philosophy could do its work, whilst the study of the Christian Scriptures, and of the development of Christian ideas, could then be treated as a section of the History of Religions. Christian theology is the concern of the Christian Church. It exists because of the Church's belief that in Christ God has so revealed Himself as to give us a knowledge of Him which we could not otherwise have gained. The theologian, like the preacher, has thus to be content to be "a fool for Christ's sake"; to be regarded by those who see in Christ no special significance as a useless vendor of unrealities. If theology has any distinctive sphere, it is within the Christian Church. It is its task to explore the content of the Christian message, not for theoretical purposes chiefly, but in order that the truths thus explored may be used by the preacher for the confirmation of Christian faith and the evangelization of the world. The contempt for theology felt by those outside the Church need occasion no surprise. What is surprising is the dislike felt for theology by many within the Church, and, especially, the indifference to it often shown by those who, as preachers of the Gospel, have to expound that revelation which theology seeks to explore.

The situation is a strange one. No preacher can maintain his work on eloquence alone. He needs sufficient grasp of Christian truth to be able to separate the permanent from the transitory, and to express his message in the idiom and the thought-forms of his age. And here theology can help. Yet how many ministers there are who boast of their ignorance of theology, and speak with scorn of those who are trying humbly and faithfully to understand and to express the Christian revelation. It may, of course, be perfectly true, as they say, that they learnt nothing in their Divinity course. But it is hard to see why they should be proud of this. We do not find students in other faculties boasting of their ignorance. They would be afraid, if they did, of being accused of idleness or of incompetency.

But the dislike of theology is not restricted to the mentally indolent. The tragedy of the War has led many to turn from the present to the past, and, abandoning all attempts to form a modern theology, to seek a way of safety either by the repristination of Protestant orthodoxy, or by a reversion to the "golden age" of Medievalism when "faith" and "reason" seemed to be united, and when men were, as it is believed, untroubled by the perplexities which distress our generation. And, at the other extreme of the Church, there are those who feel that, in a time so confused as ours, it is best to remember only what they strangely call "the simple ethical teaching of Jesus," and to renounce the

endeavour to explore the intellectual implicates of His life and work.

Especially significant is the widespread influence of two books written during the agony of the War, Karl Barth's *Commentary on Romans*,¹ and Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*.²

Few modern books are so deeply moving as Barth's book on *Romans*. As a commentary on St. Paul's Epistle it has little value. Its importance lies in the self-revelation of the author. It is an amazing book—five hundred closely packed pages of violent paradox. Like many another, Barth had looked to the rise of Christian democracy to secure for the world peace and progress. The war showed him how vain was this hope. So he lost all trust in men's thoughts and plans. No lasting good can come from any of man's activities. If we are to be saved, it must be by God's act alone. The only light we have is the light given us by Christ's death. And in this book that light appears, not as the light of the sun illuminating all things by its radiance, but rather as a streak of lightning, flashing out from the darkness of a stormy sky. Religion cannot help men, for that, too, is human. The one liberating word which religion can never find is this: God sent His own Son. And, since God sent His own Son because of sin, this liberating

¹ *Der Römerbrief*. The Preface to the first edition is dated Aug. 1918.

² *Das Heilige*, 1st edit., 1917. The book was described in an article by the writer, "The Paradox of Religion: a Study of Otto's *The Holy*," *Expositor*, Feb. 1923. The book has since been translated by Harvey under the title, *The Idea of the Holy*.

word is "to be described only in strong negations, to be preached only as a paradox, to be apprehended only as the *absurd* which, as such, is the *credible*, for it is the divine reaction against sin. The offence, the vexation which it causes us, is the reflexion of the offence, the vexation which we are to God."¹

From the standpoint of this book, theology is not only an impossibility but an impertinence. There is no Christian teaching to explore. All that is within our reach is the awed, and almost speechless, recognition of God's mysterious yet gracious act in sending Christ to die for men, revealing thus His mercy in His judgement, His grace in His unapproachable and utter holiness. And this Barth not only admitted but emphasized. Do we speak of the saving message of Christ, the Word of God as teaching, or of theology as science? We hear Kierkegaard's words, "Professors in this, that Christ was crucified," or Overbeck's "Theologians are the fools of human society."² Barth soon himself recovered from what he came to call "the children's disease of being ashamed of theology,"³ and has since exchanged the prophet's mantle for the professor's gown. But it says much for the violence of the reaction against pre-war theology that a book as extreme as his *Commentary on Romans* should have so greatly influenced many

¹ On *Rom.* viii. 3, 3rd edit., pp. 259 ff.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

³ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, E.T. by D. Horton, p. 97 (from an address given by Barth in 1924).

of the younger men in German-speaking Protestantism.

Another sign of this reaction is to be seen in Professor Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*. That book is a reminder that the essence of religion lies not in knowledge, nor in good conduct, but in awe—in our response to the *tremendum* of the Divine. Its teaching thus provides a needed correction to the self-centredness, which has been the malaise of much modern Christianity. There has been a preaching of God's love which has made that love incredible, because it spoke of it as if it were obvious—a preaching which was irreligious, for it lacked the distinctively religious element of awe. And Otto's book may help to save us from self-sufficiency and to restore to us the sense of surprise and wonder at the message of God's love in Christ. Otto himself wrote as one who realized to the full the obligation of seeking to understand the revelation of God in Christ, and so to proclaim it as to bring into prominence its rational and ethical elements. But that aspect of his teaching has been ignored by those who are unwilling to learn anything from modern theology, and who are less interested in the revealed than in the occult. And in a later impression of the English translation, Otto has protested against the uses to which his book has been put. "I do not want," he writes, "to promote in any way the tendency in our time towards an extravagant and fantastic irrationalism. The irrational is to-day a favourite theme of all who are too lazy to think, or too ready to evade

the arduous task of clarifying their ideas and grounding their convictions on a basis of coherent thought." We have to recognize with Otto that the meaning of religion is not exhausted by the rational and the ethical, but that recognition does not free us from the obligation to think as clearly as we can, and to express as intelligibly as possible the content of the Christian message.

The authority of Professor Otto's book has been widely claimed in England to justify certain phases of the Anglo-Catholic movement. The whole Church has reason to be grateful to the scholars and the theologians of that school who have taken their full share in the exploration of the Christian heritage. But others of its members who base their own life less on the Word than on the Sacraments have been glad to use it as an excuse for their indifference to the task of presenting Christianity as intelligible truth. It is an attitude which finds naïve expression in a remark made by a layman to Archdeacon Rawlinson. Complaining of the prevalence of heresy, he said, "The worst of it is that, even in cases where the clergy believe the right things, you have no guarantee that they are not believing them, merely because they happen personally to think them true, instead of accepting them, simply and solely, upon the authority of Holy Church."¹ In English, and still more in American, Protestantism, the same quest for an

¹ From a paper on "Catholicism and Freedom," read at the Anglo-Catholic Congress at Birmingham 1922, quoted in *Liberal Evangelicalism*, pp. 60 f.

unthinking faith takes another form. Submission is demanded not to "the Holy Church," but to the sacred Word of Scripture. This movement, too, has its learned theologians who are concerned for the intellectual content of Christian truth. But, for some of its noisiest members, it is sufficient to assert what seem to them the Fundamentals of Christianity: the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, the Second Advent and the Corporeal Resurrection of Christ. They are content with the stereotyped formulæ of the past, and look askance at any attempt to express the Christian message in the language of to-day, and in relation to modern historical criticism and science.

In our own land, the objection to theology is often more vocal among those who belong to the other extreme of the Christian Church. In their natural revolt against the excessive dogmatism of an earlier age, they have an aversion from any definite statement. They feel the appeal of Christ's character. They prize what they call the "simple Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount." But they do not desire to go on to ask, Who was that Man who spoke with such decisive force, and what is the content and authority of His revelation of God, and of man's nature and destiny? They prefer half-tones and neutral phrases, and, if they had their way, they would reduce the preacher's message to the record of his own devout impressions, correcting

"'I believe' to 'one does feel.'"

All these protests deserve, in part, our sympathy. Thus Karl Barth's violent paradoxes were justified in so far as they were a warning that those who seek to express the Church's faith should themselves have trembled before the God whose ways they venture to proclaim. Some in the Anglo-Catholic movement who are indifferent to the task of expressing in intelligible words the Christian message have yet helped to bring back to the Church that devout remembrance of the Saviour's death which has often been lacking in modern theology. And much of the vehemence of Fundamentalists has been due to the recklessness of some who, to use the German phrase, have "poured out the baby with the bathwater," and in rejecting the formulations of the past, have failed to retain that distinctively Christian experience, which, in however blundering a fashion, those formulations sought to conserve. At the other extreme of the Christian Church, many of those who object to definite statements of belief do so because they have suffered much from the excessive dogmatism of traditional theologies. The Christian message cannot be compressed into neat formulæ, whether those formulæ be old or new. Christianity, as Dean Inge has reminded us, is not so much taught as caught. "One loving soul," as Augustine puts it, "sets another loving soul on fire." An ignorant man who speaks out of the realities of his Christian experience may be a more effective witness to the Gospel than a learned theologian who expounds

the Christian message without being himself awed by the greatness of the truths with which he deals.

Yet the Christian experience of even the most ignorant is dependent on those Christian facts which it is the task of Christian theology to explore. And for the Christian preacher the choice does not lie between having a theology and having none at all. It lies between having a theology which is good and having a theology which is bad. A theology is good or bad according to the measure in which it worthily interprets the Christian Gospel.

Ideally all theologians would be preachers, and all preachers theologians. But there are diversities of gifts, and there should be the same kind of interrelation between the theologian and the preacher as exists in medicine between the specialist and the general practitioner. The work of the specialist would be fruitless without the general practitioner who utilizes his result. But the general practitioner, on the other hand, cannot do his work with full efficiency without the help which the specialist can give. The most essential service in the Christian Church is that of the minister and pastor; the theologian's work is subordinate and auxiliary to his. It is the theologian's task to seek for that closer definition and clearer statement of Christian truth which the preacher can in popular and moving speech pass on to his congregation. This interrelation is at present often lacking. Many a

minister not only has no interest in theology but is proud and even boastful of his ignorance of it.

Such a situation ought not to continue. It is easy for those engaged in the practical work of the ministry to feel that they have no time to read books which do not promise immediate help for sermons. Yet if men lived in the great world of Christian truth, they would be saved not only from absorption in the trivial, but from that most dreary of all quests—the quest of texts for next Sunday's sermons. Instead of texts having to be sought for, texts would cry out to be preached. Something of this indifference to theology is doubtless due to the way in which theology in the past was often taught. Theology is rightly made the subject of University examinations, but it can never be wisely taught by those whose interest in it is merely academic. Theology is concerned, not with the past alone, but with the present. It has too often been expounded as the record of outworn controversies. Like the fallen angels in their nether darkness, theologians have

“ reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost.”

Many a student has carried away from the lecture room little more than vague recollections of controversies on the Person of Christ—Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Mono-

thelitism and the like—or on the nature of man as interpreted by a Pelagius or an Augustine, or of varying theories of the work of Christ, or of the triune nature of God. Not unnaturally he has concluded that theology had little relation to the Gospel which he had to preach. The theologian has to know the past, and is under obligation to explore the intellectual implicates of Christian truth, but such implicates have only a subordinate importance. Instead, they have been given undue prominence, with the result that many a young minister has turned away with weariness from the study of theology, believing that it has as its chief concern, not the exploration of the Gospel, but the discussion of abstruse problems in which as a preacher he has no interest. In certain moods, many of us can sympathize with the brusque answer Luther gave to one who asked him what God was doing before the creation of the world. “Why, he was in a birch grove getting birch rods ready to flog those who ask such questions.”¹

Much as we may admire the intellectual subtlety of the great Schoolmen of the medieval or the late Reformation periods, we know that as preachers we can use very little of their labours. Preaching is not concerned with the gratification of intellectual curiosity, but with the manifestation of God. It has for its aim not the exposition of abstruse theories, but the setting forth of the Gospel in such a way

¹ So Augustine speaks of one who answered this question with the words, “He was getting Gehenna ready for those who inquire about high things.” *Confessions*, xi, 12.

that men may be led to know, trust, and obey the God whose holy love has been revealed in Christ.

We cannot rid ourselves of false theologies by the simple device of having no theology at all. The great problems of life and destiny are too solemn and urgent to be for long evaded. If the preacher is to speak, and not merely to mumble, he must have something to say in answer to them. As even Barth has come to recognize, "Our disparagement of doctrine is the fox's disparagement of the grapes. Had we something more essential and authoritative to say, had we a theology convincing to, and accepted by, definite and increasing groups of people, had we a gospel which we had to preach, we should think differently." And thus "the question of right doctrine introduces us to the vacuum inside our Churches, and inside Christianity."¹ That "vacuum" must be filled if the full resources of the Gospel are once more to be revealed. We cannot do our work as Christian preachers except as we gain a conception of Christian truth less vulnerable than the old, and more closely related to modern needs, and yet at the same time retaining that vital experience which the ancient formulations sought to express.

Vaguely our people feel that the older view of the Bible is no longer tenable. Yet many of them have not learnt to put in its place a truer view of its authority and value. Their Christian life gathers

¹ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, pp. 220 f.

around the person of Jesus Christ, yet they do not know how to relate their faith in Him to their faith in God. Some put all their trust in Jesus but feel that they dare not say with confidence what God is like. Others think it easy to believe in God and see in Jesus only the first true believer in God the Father, so that the Church's assertion of the divinity of Christ seems to them only a needless sophistication, an added burden to their faith in God. Many there are who are solemnized by the remembrance of His Cross and yet are troubled because they feel that the Church expects them to believe in a penal theory of the Atonement which seems to them, not unintelligible only, but immoral. Others are distressed, because, although they cannot believe in the everlasting torment of the damned, they yet have an uneasy feeling that that is part of the orthodoxy which as Christians they are expected to profess. Crudely and bluntly stated, these are some of the difficulties which perplex the members of our Churches. Only as these difficulties are fairly faced can we proclaim with confidence the Christian message, knowing that in the Gospel we have not an increase to our perplexities but their one adequate solution.

And the Church has to proclaim its message, not only to its members, but to the great pagan world of East and West. The achievements of Christian missions in the East are the greatest glory of the modern Church. But the work of missions has been hindered much by the attempt to impose upon

the East formulations of Christianity which belong to earlier ages of Western culture. If Christianity is to be the religion of the East, it must be translated into Eastern idioms. But to translate we must first understand. Nothing is more needed for missionary work than a theology which has learnt to separate the essential from the unessential, and to present its treasure in earthen vessels which are of Eastern, not of Western, manufacture.¹ So long as we present Christianity in a purely Western form, we must not complain if it seems to many in the East a religion only for the West, and our preaching of it, not the proclamation of a gospel, but an expression of what they deem our Western arrogance and self-sufficiency.

And Christianity is confronted with paganism, not in the East alone, but in the West. It is only by courtesy that any country can be called a Christian land. We are no longer faced by the austere agnosticism of some of the great Victorians, who, rejecting reluctantly the Christian creed, yet sought to conserve the Christian ideal of love and duty.

¹ It is the lack of this which accounts in part for the alien and exotic nature of much Indian Christianity. Thus when in charge of a school for Indian evangelists, I found that, at first, all began their sermons at the Sermon Class with an account of "the Plan of Salvation," beginning with Adam's fall. This had no relation to their own experience. That had as its concern the freedom from the fear of demons which had come to them through Christ. So, too, in an elaborate Tamil book of Christian doctrine written by a Western missionary, I found a full exposition of the so-called "Proofs" for the existence of God (the Ontological, Cosmological and Teleological Proofs), and lengthy arguments for the truth of the miraculous—and that for people who all believed in the existence of the Divine and lived in a wonder-world of miracle.

That compromise has proved short-lived. It is not merely the Christian creed which is at issue to-day, but the Christian way of life. The problems with which theology has in the past tended most to deal have lost their meaning for many in the modern world. Men are no longer agitated by questions which lie at the circumference of Christian faith—questions such as the Virgin Birth, the miraculous, or the metaphysical exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the prior problems of religion which to-day are prominent. They are problems which concern the meaning of the universe, and the value and permanence of our human lives. And these problems are only variant forms of that first and final problem, Is there a God, and, if so, what is He like and what is the secret of His rule?

It is with this problem that Christian theology has, as its chief task, to deal. Christian theology is the expression of that Christian faith which sees in Christ the revelation of God, and so the revelation of the nature of God's character and rule. Thus it deals with the most practical of all themes. If we know what God is, then we know the secret of His rule, and have in the holy love revealed in Christ the standard by which our life-task is to be judged and faced.

(ii) THE METHOD OF THEOLOGY

Christian theology has thus for its prime concern the revelation of God in Christ. That revelation

can be known only as it is received by faith. And this revelation thus experienced has to be expressed in the categories of our age and place. There can thus be no final theology. Our knowledge of God's self-revelation is imperfect, though it can be increased by the faithful study of its record, and by the exploration of the revelation from the standpoint of new and larger needs. Our appropriation of that revelation is incomplete. It is limited not by our own defects alone, but by the defects of our age and Church. And the categories with which we seek to express the revelation, thus partly known and partly experienced, are transient and local. It is enough if we can express the Christian message to our own age. We cannot hope to express it for generations yet unborn. Revelation, appropriation, intellectual interpretation: these are the three moments of Christian theology. It is necessary to say a little more about this approach before we proceed to discuss from this standpoint the several doctrines of the Christian faith.

Knowledge of God has not come to men through Christ alone. In a well-known passage St. Paul declared that "the invisible things" of God "are clearly seen, being perceived by the things that are made."¹ That is now a dogma of the Roman Church, for the Vatican Council of 1869 and 1870 laid down that "if anyone says that the one and true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason,

¹ Rom. i. 19 ff.

through the things that are made, let him be anathema.”¹ So, too, Protestant orthodoxy spoke of “a general revelation or natural manifestation by which God shows Himself at once by the innate light of nature, and by the effects manifest in the kingdom of nature.”² But if we knew God only through the works of nature, our knowledge of Him would be dim.

The passage of St. Paul from which we have quoted is one of the least original in his writings, and is little more than a transcript of the commonplaces of Jewish criticism of idolatry. It seems too harsh to say that those who fail to discern in nature God’s “everlasting power and divinity” are “without excuse.” Thus, in the teeming life of a tropic land, where nature appears as at once generous and hostile, it is hard to derive from nature the belief in God as the sole Creator; it is easy to believe that there are many gods, some kind but others cruel and capricious. The history of religions shows the universal recognition of a supernatural power or powers, but it provides little evidence of man’s capacity to find the Creator behind the created. Where monotheism has been reached, it has been reached more by the spiritual responsiveness of prophets than by the observation of nature by ordinary men.

For us in the West, the advance of science has made manifest a unity in nature which makes it

¹ The first of the Canons on Revelation (Mirbt., *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papstums* 4, p. 460).

² Hollaz, quoted by Lemme, *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, i, p. 177.

needless to suppose that the universe is ruled by a multiplicity of supernatural powers. But nature alone does not provide us with more than the conception of a great creative and sustaining Mind. As Professor Eddington puts it, "The idea of a universal Mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory; at least it is in harmony with it." But he adds, "Science cannot tell whether the world-spirit is good or evil, and its halting argument for the existence of a God might equally well be turned into an argument for the existence of a Devil."¹

In modern philosophy the most promising attempts to demonstrate the existence of a living God have come from those who to the conception of an infinite Mind derived from the observation of the universe add the conception of a righteous God derived from the recognition of the validity of the moral values. And it may at least be claimed that this personal Theism, which is congruous with Christianity, is a "live option" giving an interpretation of life which is more adequate than any other.²

Truth is one, but the approaches to it are many. A true theology and a true philosophy would agree in their conclusions. But the method of theology is different from that of philosophy. Philosophy works upward from the consideration

¹ *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 338.

² Cp. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, and Matthews, *Studies in Christian Philosophy*.

of man and the universe. Christian theology has for its first concern the exploration of the revelation of God in Christ known by believing men.

That revelation is a revelation of God active in men's salvation. It is here that our approach differs from that of some of the older theologies. We do not begin, as did St. Thomas Aquinas, with the knowledge of God reached by the natural reason, and add to that doctrines like that of the Trinity given us by revelation. Nor can we, with the Schoolmen of the Protestant Church, identify God's special revelation with the whole content of the Bible. There is no revealed theology. What God has given us is the revelation of Himself in history, a revelation which reaches its perfection in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This revelation is not primarily of historic facts or doctrines. It is the revelation of God in His saving activity for men.

Because this revelation is a personal revelation, it can only be known by our personal response. God the Revealer is God the Reconciler, for we know Him in the personal relationship of faith. As Luther said in his *Larger Catechism*, in his explanation of the First Commandment, "To have God is nothing else than to trust and believe in Him with all the heart. These two, faith and God, belong together."¹

It is this which explains the rich and distinctive

¹ *Haec duo, fides et deus, una copula coniungenda sunt.*

content of Christian faith. Faith is man's response to a gracious God. It includes that awe, which, as Otto has reminded us, is the peculiar element of religion. But with awe there goes humble and confident trust, and the self-committal of obedience. So St. Paul sees in faith the one condition for our reception of God's forgiveness. God's grace requires our faith that we may be brought into the relationship of children to their holy, heavenly Father. Faith in this distinctively Christian sense is not an assent to a system of doctrines. It is an act of self-committal to a gracious God. "Faith, if it hath not works," is, indeed "dead."¹ But a faith without works is not classic Christian faith. Faith, as St. Paul understood it, goes on inevitably to love and does its works.²

It was this conception of faith which Luther rediscovered. The battlecry of Lutheranism "by faith alone" is meaningless unless faith means trust in a gracious God. With the Catholic conception of faith as assent to the dogmas of the Church, went the teaching that faith alone was not enough. Faith had to be "informed" with love before it could suffice. For Luther, no such addition was required. "Faith," as he put it, "asks not whether good works are to be done, but before the question is put, it has already done them, and is always doing them."³

¹ Jas. ii. 17.

² Cp. Gal. v. 6.

³ Preface to *Romans* (1522).

Faith, thus understood, is the human answer to the grace of God. And such faith has knowledge. The Christian revelation finds its verification in Christian experience.

In a noble section of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson declared—

“ We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see.”

In this sense, faith is not knowledge, for it does not deal with things we see. But knowledge is not only of “ things we see.” In our estimate of things, we rely on observation, calculation and the cautious examination of evidence. But in our estimate of persons, we rely on other standards of judgement. Here our judgement is of a personal kind. As Heim puts it, “ If I am certain that my mother loves me, that my wife is loyal, that my friend will not desert me even at the time of misfortune, my certainty is clearly of another kind from that by which I am convinced that the opposite angles of a parallelogram are equal, or that there is a famine in India, or that the day of Luther’s death was February 18th, 1546.”¹ It is by such personal judgements that the great choices in life are made. Thus a stable marriage cannot be based merely on sex-attraction. It is based on mutual confidence. Bride and bridegroom trust each other, and, because of their trust, dare to link their lives together. Those incapable of such trust are unlikely to

¹ *Glaubensgewissheit* ², p. 3.

believe in, or maintain, a true and lasting union. Personal judgements depend, as abstract judgements do not, on the character of those who make them. A bad man may be a good mathematician ; he is not likely to form true "judgements of worth." The man who is ready to sell his honour will believe that any man can be bought, if the price paid be sufficient ; the impure find it hard to believe in purity, the dishonest in unprofitable honesty.

The claim made in modern theology that faith is itself an organ of knowledge is not then a convenient device to protect religion from due scrutiny. When Ritschl taught that religious judgements are "value-judgements" or "judgements of worth" (*Werthurteile*), he was widely accused of seeking to deceive. But, whatever else Ritschl was, he was at least a man of sturdy honesty, and incapable of the sophistry of teaching that there are two kinds of truth, the truth we believe because it suits our needs, and the truth which corresponds to objective reality. The "value-judgements" of religion are as much concerned with truth as are the impersonal judgements of abstract reasoning. But they belong to a different mode of cognition—the cognition which comes from the faith which is a personal response to God's personal self-revelation. The phrase "value-judgement" is not, in some respects, a happy one. But Ritschl was surely right when he taught that the Christian confession of Christ as Lord is not "an act of disinterested cognition"; it

comes from our experience of His "saving influence."¹

This knowledge of faith belongs only to faith's immediate utterances. It does not guarantee the truth of theories formed for their explication. In the Roman Church assent is demanded to the dogmas of the Church. In Protestant orthodoxy faith was demanded in complex systems of theology which claimed to reproduce the teaching of the Bible. Such demands could be met only by a surrender of the intellect and that is no part of Christian loyalty. Dogmatic formulations have to be scrutinized like other hypotheses, whilst the Bible contains not only a revelation of God, but contemporary views of the universe with which faith has no concern. Faith may know with certainty that God has spoken to us in Christ, and has in Him brought us into the relationship of children to their Father. But the Christian experience of God revealed as Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, is one thing. A theological statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is another. The first is an immediate utterance of Christian faith; the second is an ultimate implicate, an attempt to give to faith's immediate utterance a coherent expression. Such ultimate implicates are of subordinate importance.

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii, E.T., 398 f. Stephan, one of the latest writers of the Ritschlian School, points out that the Sermon on the Mount, Paul and John alike teach that knowledge of the supersensual can only be reached in a religious way, and in response to Revelation. Stephan himself prefers to speak not of "judgements of value," but of "judgements of trust," thus making clear that religion has its analogies in other spheres of life (*Glaubenslehre*, pp. 67 f.).

The only authority they can claim is the authority of an adequate hypothesis.

Theology is thus neither "objective" nor "subjective" only. There is no revealed system of Christian doctrine to which we have the right to claim man's assent. Yet although theology is an expression of experience, that experience is not individual or self-created. Christian experience is a response to the given. Revelation is primary; but the revelation which has come to us in Christ is a revelation which can be known and experienced by all believing men. And this revelation, which is known as it is received, and this experience, which is the experience of the revealed, have to be expressed in the thought-forms of our age. Theology cannot be isolated. It gives a knowledge of God which is to be related to the philosophy and science of our age.

It is from this point of view that we can best assess the reliance of Theology on Scripture and Church dogmas.

(a) The Authority of Scripture

The Church took over from Judaism the Old Testament and naturally gave to it a Christian interpretation. It had itself at first no Sacred Scripture of its own. For its knowledge of Christ it relied upon the preaching of those who had been eye-witnesses of His life, and of those who, like St.

Paul, bore witness to His risen power. As eye-witnesses and apostles passed away, there was felt the need of writings which should set forth the story of His deeds and words. Later the spread of Gnosticism within the Church led to the demand for an authoritative Canon, and by the beginning of the third century most of our present New Testament was regarded as Sacred Scripture, although some New Testament writings still failed to secure universal recognition.¹

At the Reformation, the authority of Sacred Scripture assumed a new importance. Whereas Catholic theologians in general based their systems on Scripture and tradition, the Reformers asserted that the Scriptures were the sole and sufficient source of Christian truth.² One of Luther's first tasks was to translate the Bible into German. Wherever the Reformation spread, there went the reading of the Bible, and the Scriptures became the concern, not of the theologian only, but of the simple Christian.

Luther, in the great first years of the Reformation, based his religion less on the Bible than on the Gospel in the Bible. In the preface to his translation of the New Testament published in 1522 he declared, "The Gospel of St. John and his First

¹ So Eusebius, in his *Church History* (iii. 25), speaks of the Epistles of James, Jude, 2 and 3 John and 2 Peter as "disputed writings," and seems doubtful whether the Book of Revelation is genuine or spurious.

² So the Schmalkald Articles of 1537 declare: "The articles of faith are not to be built up from the words or the deeds of the Fathers"; "The Word of God should establish the articles of faith, and none other not even an angel."

Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, the Galatians, the Ephesians, and St. Peter's First Epistle: these are the books which show Christ to thee and teach all that it is necessary and blessed for thee to know, even if thou saw or heard no other book or teaching. On the other hand, the Epistle of St. James is a right strawy (*recht strohern*) Epistle, for it is not of an evangelical sort." And in his preface to the Epistle of St. James, he wrote, "The right testing-stone by which to judge all books is this: to see whether they ply Christ or not, since all Scripture shows Christ, and Paul will know nothing but Christ. What does not teach Christ, that is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul taught it. Conversely, what preaches Christ, that would be apostolic, even though it came from Judas, Annas or Pilate." These words offended many of Luther's contemporaries, and in later editions of the New Testament Luther expressed himself more cautiously. Increasingly the teachers of the Reformation opposed to the infallible authority claimed by the Roman Church, the infallible authority of Holy Scripture.

It was to Calvin that the Reformation owed its systematic identification of the Word of God with the whole content of the Bible. The Apostles were for him "the sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit,"¹ and he regarded not only the New Testament but the Old as fully authoritative for Christian faith, for its words are the words of

¹ *Institutes*, 1559 edit., IV, viii, 9.

God.¹ Yet he, too, was unwilling to regard the Bible as a merely external authority. "The full conviction with which we ought to receive" Scripture is due to "the testimony of the Spirit."² Had that thought been developed, Protestantism might have been saved from its undue subservience to the written word. The testimony of the Spirit can only attest spiritual truths which are verifiable in Christian experience. Instead, assent was demanded to everything the Bible taught. And this mechanical view of inspiration reached its climax in a Canon of the Helvetic Formula of Consensus which declared that "the Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament is not only in regard to the consonants, but also in regard to the vowel-points . . . to be recognized as the Word of God."³

Such an interpretation of Scripture has become impossible. The "Lower" Criticism has shown that in many places in Scripture we cannot be sure of the original text; the "Higher" Criticism has revealed that some of the documents are compiled from various and contradictory sources. And Natural Science has made clear that, judged as science, such stories as that of the Creation can no longer be accepted.

¹ *Cp. op. cit.*, I, vii, 4.

² *Op. cit.*, I, vii, 5.

³ The vowel-points were not added to the consonants of the Hebrew text until long after the Christian era. The doctrine of plenary inspiration was not a peculiarity of Protestantism. It is a dogma of the Roman Church. Thus the Vatican Council (1870) reaffirmed that the books of the Vulgate "have God for their author."

Nor can we claim that, although the Bible is fallible as history and as science, it is infallible in the spheres of ethics and religion. As we remember the circumstances of their age we can understand, but we cannot approve, the language of the Imprecatory Psalms. There is not one conception of God in the Bible. There are many, and some of them are irreconcilable with the conception of God which we find in Jesus Christ. Nor are our difficulties confined to the Old Testament. It is hard to reconcile the picture given us of our Lord's ministry in the Fourth Gospel with that of the other three. Even in the Synoptic Gospels, it is improbable that all the words assigned to our Lord are His. As we compare, for instance, Matt. x. or Matt. xxiv. with the parallels in Mark and Luke, it seems impossible to suppose that we have in these chapters the faultless record of the words of Jesus.

God has not willed to give to men a book of indubitable facts and clearly formulated teachings. A religion based upon an infallible handbook of religion and ethics would be a religion, static and legalistic. Christianity is not founded on a book, but on the personal revelation of the living God. The Old Testament shows God's dealings with the Jewish people. At every stage we can trace the close connexion of history and experience. Slowly men learnt to know God as one and true and just. In the New Testament, the association of this discovery with the fortunes of one people was dissolved. The meaning of the Old Covenant was

discovered in the New. In the coming of Jesus Christ there was made known the purpose and the end of God's long and patient dealing with the Jewish people.

Yet the significance of Jesus does not lie chiefly in His words. He was not a new lawgiver. Had He been, Christianity would have been as inseparably connected with His age and land as Islam is with the Arabia of Muhammad's time. He did not bequeath to us a book of teaching. He spoke in Aramaic; our Gospels are in Greek, and the memory of His words has been influenced by the interests of the Evangelists. Though the Gospels are thus the products of Christian faith, they yet serve as faith's creators. They sufficiently reveal that Man whose life and death speak even more powerfully than His words. And the experience of Him expressed in the rest of the New Testament is reproducible in men of every age. Thus the Bible is the classic record of God's self-revelation known in human experience, and expressed in the thought-forms of its age. It does not give us an infallible authority. It does give us the record of God's revelation, and of men's experience of it. As Dr. W. Robertson Smith put it, "If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church, Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Jesus Christ, and declaring

to us in this His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.”¹

(b) *The Authority of Dogma*

It is from this same standpoint that we can determine our attitude to the dogmas of the Church.

The Church of Apostolic times had no authoritative theology. What it had was a *kerugma*, a preaching message which represented the common tradition of the Church, and was summed up in such short and pregnant sayings as these: “Jesus is Lord,” “Christ died for our sins and rose again.”² The same influences which compelled the Church to fix a Canon of New Testament writings compelled it to affirm the Rule of Faith, which found its final expression in the so-called Apostles’ Creed. That Rule of Faith was established, not by the decision of a Council, but by custom and consent.

Only when Christianity became the nominal religion of the Empire was the attempt made to secure the authoritative definition of Christian truth by Œcumenical Councils. Thus the Council of Nicæa of A.D. 325 was convened by Constantine to bring to an end the confusion caused by the

¹ In his *Answer to the Form of Libel*, p. 21 (*Expositor*, IV, x, p. 250).

² Cp. 1 Cor. xii. 3 and xv. 3 f.

Arian controversy. Rightly that Council rejected Arius's pagan conception of Christ as a demi-god, and affirmed His full divinity. But not all was gain. As Monsignor Duchesne, the great Roman Catholic historian, points out, in its earlier controversies, "Christianity had eliminated the morbid germs by the mere reaction of a vigorous organism." "There had been no necessity for council, or emperor, or creeds, or signatures." "But in this affair with Arius the strongest measures were called into requisition; and the only result was a truce of very short duration, followed by an abominable and fratricidal war, which divided the whole of Christendom, from Arabia to Spain, and only ceased at last, after sixty years of scandal, by bequeathing as a legacy for generations to come the germs of schism, the effects of which the Church still feels."¹

This Council of Nicæa had set an example, which later Councils were to follow, of seeking to solve controversies by decisions enforced by the full power of the State. On the history of later Councils it is impossible to dwell. Next in importance to the Council of Nicæa is the Fourth Œcumenical Council which met at Chalcedon in A.D. 451. To the Arian controversy had succeeded bitter controversies about the nature of Christ's incarnate person. As Nicæa rejected the mythological idea of a half-God, so Chalcedon rejected the mythological idea of a half-man, and declared that Christ was both

¹ *The Early History of the Church*, E.T., ii., p. 124.

truly God and truly man. Here, too, later Christian thought has confirmed the correctness of the decision made. But later history was to show how illusive are victories won in theology by force. And the Council of Chalcedon was followed in the East by two hundred years of cruel strife. When the Sixth Œcumenical Council met at Constantinople in A.D. 680, the influence of the West forced on the East the dogma of dyothelitism—the dogma that the incarnate Christ had two wills, one human, one divine. The controversies about Christ so hid Christ from men that images were needed as objects of devotion. When the Seventh Œcumenical Council met at Nicæa in A.D. 787, it legalized the veneration of images of Christ and of the Virgin and the saints.¹

In the Eastern Church, the decisions of these seven Œcumenical Councils form the dogmas of the Church. In the Roman Church, dogmas are not thus restricted, and the development of dogmas still continues.

The Western Church was less interested in theology than in organization. It had early found for itself the formulæ with which to express its belief in the Incarnation and the Trinity, and at both Nicæa and Chalcedon it was the West which imposed upon the East the decisive word. Acceptance of the decisions of the Councils formed part of the obedience demanded by the Church.

¹ Cp. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, II³, p. 266, and see later, pp. 149-56.

When in the Middle Ages the authority of the Church was centred in the Pope, papal decretals came to be treated as dogmas, and this tendency has now reached its consummation in the promulgation by the Vatican Council of 1869 and 1870 of the dogma of the infallibility of the *ex cathedra* utterances of the Pope on doctrine and on morals.

From the Roman position, differences of opinion are only to be tolerated on doctrines which have not yet been defined as dogma. When once a dogma has been promulgated, absolute obedience to it is required.¹

Such a conception of dogma involves a quite different view of faith from that of Protestantism, and, as it seems to us, from that of the New Testament. Faith is not, as with St. Paul, the response of the whole man to the gracious God revealed in Christ; it is an act of submission to the Church. As many of the Church's dogmas are unintelligible to the untrained mind, the most effective element in faith is faith in the authority of the Church, and this carries with it assent to all the dogmas of the Church.

It was part of Luther's greatness that he rediscovered the conception of faith as personal trust

¹ Thus St. Thomas Aquinas is not regarded as heretical because he taught that the Virgin Mary, though sanctified in the womb before her birth, was not sanctified before her animation (*Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 27), and so was not immaculately conceived. For the doctrine that the Virgin was immaculately conceived became a dogma only at the issue by Pius IX of the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854. Anyone who denied that doctrine since that time would be regarded as a heretic.

in the mercy of God. But the conception of dogma was inadequately related to this rediscovery of faith's meaning. The Reformers speedily passed from Luther's first simplification of theology to the construction of elaborate Confessions. Yet there was this difference. For Protestant theologians the authority of the ancient creeds depended not on the Church but on the Bible, whose teaching they were believed to represent. Thus for Calvin the fact that a Council was Œcumenical did not in itself ensure the truth of its decision. The Council of Nicæa of A.D. 787 was Œcumenical, yet its sanction of the veneration of images "emanated from Satan." The doctrinal statements of the first four Œcumenical Councils he accepted, but he did so on the ground that they "contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture."¹ It is hard for us to see in the elaborate Confessions of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches simple transcripts of the teaching of the Bible, yet it was on this ground that adherence to them was demanded.

In modern Protestantism, there is much confusion in regard to the validity of dogmas. The distinctive standards of the Reformation Churches have proved more a hindrance than a help to faith. Yet there is a natural reluctance to abandon them, even when they have lost their meaning for modern men. Nor have the ancient Creeds their old authority. Thus the so-called "Athanasian" Creed gives an impressive

¹ *Institutes*, IV, ix, 8 f.

and powerful summary of the doctrine of the Trinity which has been current in the West, but its attempt to make salvation depend on assent to its doctrines is in clear contradiction to the evangelical conception of faith. Of far greater influence in the modern Church are the so-called "Nicene" Creed,¹ and the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon. As we have seen, they mark decisive stages in the clarification of man's conception of Christ. In their time they did a useful service by their rejection of solutions which, though they seemed simple, were inadequate. But the truth for which they stood was expressed in the categories of their age. Behind the "Nicene" Creed lies the Græco-Oriental philosophy of "substance," and we to-day are committed by our Christian faith to a philosophy of personality. And the Definition of Chalcedon is expressed in terms involving the conception of a double will in Jesus, and that is a psychological conception which to us is meaningless.

Once again, we have to remember that theology is the local and transient expression of the revelation received by faith. We have the same right and obligation to express our faith in the thought-forms of our age and place as those who expressed Christianity in the thought-forms of the Græco-Oriental world. There are no infallible dogmas. Each age has to form its own theology.

Yet a *kerugma*, a preaching message, there is.

¹ The modified form of the Creed of Nicæa of 325 adopted by the Council of Chalcedon of 451 and erroneously assigned to the Council of Constantinople of 381.

The Church cannot live unless it has a Gospel to proclaim. Dogmas have their value as the expression of the way in which, in the past, errors have been rejected, and the content of the Gospel re-asserted. But not even the most venerable and prized of creeds can save us from the trouble of expressing our own faith. Theology has still to attempt the task of stating in the thought-forms of our age the common Christian experience of the God revealed in Christ.

(iii) THE ORDER OF THEOLOGY

If theology be thus the expression in the terms of our age of the revelation of God in Christ received by faith, it is clear that we must forgo the æsthetic pleasure of attempting to construct an ordered system. The immense theology of a St. Thomas of Aquinas has the massive splendour of a Gothic cathedral. First are laid the foundations of natural theology. Upon these is superimposed the vast edifice of revealed truth, the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Spirit and the Church. No one can study his great masterpiece without appreciating its author's architectonic skill. Such an edifice could be erected only when the Church believed that all knowledge lay at its disposal. But since the edifice rested on the foundations of natural theology, if those foundations became insecure, the whole construction would be in jeopardy. For us, no such foundations can be laid, for we have

no normative philosophy.¹ The construction had a still graver disadvantage. In St. Thomas Aquinas's system both the prime truths of Christianity and obscure and otiose speculations are presented as if they were of equal certainty. Such a presentation makes faith at times a mere assent to the Church's teaching. It is impossible, for instance, to verify by Christian experience the truth of St. Thomas's views about the way in which angels move.²

At the beginning of the Reformation, Luther and Melancthon concentrated on the one saving fact of the appropriation by faith of God's forgiveness, but that stage soon passed. Protestant theologians once more erected their systems on the basis of the Aristotelian "natural theology" which Luther had attacked, claiming for "the revealed theology" imposed on this the infallible authority of Holy Scripture.

For us this method is impossible. We know of no articulated system of theology to which we have the right to claim assent. For us theology cannot be erected like a building, storey upon storey. Faith has but one object, God revealed in Christ. Amid the darkness which besets our human life we have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus

¹ By a true instinct of self-preservation, the Roman Church now declares that not only the theology but the philosophy of St. Thomas is to be accepted (cp. Leo XIII's Encyclical *Æterni Patris*, 1879). A new codex added to Canon Law in 1917 requires all professors in Catholic seminaries to teach philosophy as well as theology "according to the arguments, doctrine and principles of St. Thomas, which they are inviolably to hold."

² Cp. *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 53.

Christ. The light which there shone forth sends out its beams in all directions to illuminate our pilgrim way. System thus becomes impossible, and repetition is inevitable, for every doctrine has to be considered in the light which shines from the central radiancy of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The order of treatment is of slight importance. But since faith has for its prime concern the revelation of God, it seems best to begin with the Christian Conception of God and then to pass on to the implicates of that conception, Salvation through Christ, Life in the Spirit, and the content of the Christian Hope.

II

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

“TO-DAY,” says Professor Whitehead, “there is but one religious dogma in debate : What do you mean by God ? And in this respect to-day is like all its yesterdays. This is the fundamental religious dogma, and all other dogmas are subsidiary to it.”¹

His words are a reminder of the difficulty of describing the Christian Conception of God. In some religions, as in Hinduism, there are many conceptions of God and hence many doctrines which may be treated in isolation. In Christianity, there is one supreme doctrine, God known in Christ through the Spirit. From this one doctrine all other doctrines are derived, and it is only for the convenience of exposition that we have a separate chapter on the Christian Conception of God. All the doctrines with which we have to deal might be dealt with under this head.

(i) THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPTION

In a recent book we find the statement, “The God of Jesus is the God of the Jews about whom He says nothing which cannot be paralleled in Jewish literature.”² That statement, as we shall see, is

¹ *Religion in the Making*, p. 56.

² Foakes Jackson and Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, i, p. 188.

quite inadequate if it means that in Jesus there has been given no new revelation of the grace and power of God, but it may serve as a reminder that Jesus addressed Himself to Jews who had already reached a truly ethical monotheism. He had not to show that there was but one God, and He was holy; that was already the conviction of the Jewish people.

That conviction the Jews derived from their long history, which the Prophets had taught them to interpret as the history of God's dealing with His chosen people. The distinctive interest of the Jews was not philosophy but religion, and since their experience of God was expressed in the living symbols of religion, the Old Testament is still a living book. Philosophical categories become outworn; the immediate utterances of religion have in every age creative power.

Of Jewish religion in our Lord's time it is hard to speak simply and confidently. Jewish scholars justly complain of the way in which that religion is often described. It was the tragedy of Judaism that its good became the enemy of the best, and because its religious leaders secured the death of Jesus, Christian writers have often tended to speak only of its less noble aspects. Our Lord's denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees are not so much estimates of Judaism, as denunciations which are as applicable to us to-day as they were to the Judaism of His age. Wherever a religious system is dominant, there is the growth of vested

interests which tend to make its leaders hostile to new truth, and intolerant of new movements which menace their supremacy.

No further proof of the moral grandeur of Judaism is required than this: that its Bible was the Old Testament,¹ and its hymnbook the Book of Psalms. Although the Judaism of our Lord's time lacked the creative genius of the great teaching Prophets, it has to be remembered that the Prophets had stood out from among their people in solitary grandeur. The Law secured a higher average of religion and morality than was possible in their time, and, through its discipline, even the most ignorant of Jews had learned that there was but one God, and He was just and holy.

It is as impossible to compress the Judaism of that age into a simple formula as it would be to describe by a phrase the religion of modern Christians. The Gospels themselves indicate that there were those who shared in the intimate and personal religion of the Prophets and the Psalmists. Yet the very success of Judaism had led to a certain conventionalization of religion. The transcendence of God was increasingly emphasized. Only in the temple-cult could the name of the Lord be uttered.² In their

¹ With the probable exception of certain books, *e.g.* the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. It was one of the peculiarities of the Sadducees that they recognized as Scripture only the Five Books of the Law.

² The word "Jehovah" in our versions is a reminder of this. It is a word which dates only from the Reformation, and arose through a misunderstanding of the Massoretic Hebrew text. When that text was compiled, and the vowel-points added to the consonants of the Hebrew text, the vowels of Adonai, "Lord," were given to the con-

awe of God, men were reluctant to speak of Him, and spoke, instead, of His Word, His Spirit or of the Angel of His presence. The Law, which was regarded as the expression of His will, tended to take the place of God as the immediate object of piety, so that obedience to God came to mean for many, not the spontaneous response of faith to a God both known and loved, but obedience to the detailed regulations of the written and the oral Law. In this way, devotion to the Law produced a legal conception of God's relationship to men, and legalism oscillates always between fear and pride.

And Jewish religion in our Lord's time had been modified, not only by the legalism of the Scribes, but by the phantasies of the Apocalyptic writers. The Prophets had regarded this present age as the sphere of God's activity. In this world God would manifest His salvation and His judgement. The Apocalyptists had a more sombre hope. This age was evil and beyond redemption. God would bring it to an end, and would inaugurate a New Age by His sudden and catastrophic act. By some the coming of this New Age was connected with the appearance of a Messianic King. The Gospels witness to the intense eagerness with which many in our Lord's time looked forward to the coming

sonants JHVH as a direction to the reader to say "Adonai," and not the ineffable name JHVH. So, too, the Septuagint renders Lev. xxiv. 16. ("He that *blasphemeth* the name of the Lord shall be put to death") "Whoso *nameth* the name of the Lord shall be put to death" (cp. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judenthums*³, p. 308).

of the New Age. Apocalypse helped to sustain the courage of the Jewish people at a time when they were oppressed by pagan rulers. But the Apocalyptic writers still further emphasized the awful remoteness of God, and, for the most part, described His glory in terms of the bizarre splendours of a magnified Oriental despot. And since they held that the coming of the New Age depended not on man's response, but on God's sole act, they depicted God as arbitrary and stern. Their faith in Him was less a present experience of His consolation than an expectation of His future act of judgement on those who were His enemies.

Our Lord's teaching on God was nearer to that of the Prophets than to that of the Judaism of His time. Like the Prophets, He felt no need to substitute for the word "God" some indirect designation.¹ Yet He retained to the full the Jewish awe of God, and forbade the use of oaths, since oaths were an infringement on God's majesty.² God was the Lord of heaven and earth. Men were servants who could claim from Him no reward.³ And in His model prayer for His disciples' use, our Lord bade men pray first for the hallowing of God's name and the doing of His will.

Man's relationship to God is not, then, that of trust and prayer alone. We have to fear God with a fear which excludes all other fear.⁴ Though our

¹ Luke in one place (vi. 35) does, indeed, represent Jesus as speaking of God as "the Highest," but for this the parallel passage in Matt. v. 45 has "Your Father in heaven."

² Matt. v. 33-7.

³ Luke xvii. 10.

⁴ Matt. x, 28.

Lord thus retained the Jewish awe of God as the almighty, holy Ruler of the world, He yet bade us call God Father. That, too, is a teaching which can be paralleled in Jewish writings. A Psalmist had spoken of a God who "like as a father pitieth his children,"¹ and we find in Rabbinic writings many references to men's trust in a gracious God. But for our Lord, God's Fatherhood was not an occasional description. It was the prime source of religious confidence. He, who bade men fear God, bade His disciples have no fear, for it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the Kingdom.² That Kingdom was the greatest of all treasures. Men could not enter it of themselves. It was God's gracious gift to men. And since that gracious gift did not depend on men's desert, it was open even to the ignorant and the outcast.

It is here that we meet an aspect of our Lord's teaching not to be found in Judaism. As a modern Jewish scholar remarks, "The sinners drew near to hear him."³ Surely this is a new note, something which we have not yet heard in the Old Testament or of its heroes . . . His teaching did not repel them. It did not palter with, or make light of sin, but yet it gave comfort to the sinner. The virtues of repentance are gloriously praised in the Rabbinical literature, but this direct search for, and appeal to, the sinner, are new and moving notes of high import and significance. The good shepherd who

¹ Ps. ciii. 13.

² Luke xii. 32.

³ Luke xv. 1.

searches for the lost sheep, and reclaims it, and rejoices over it, is a new figure which has never ceased to play its great part in the moral and religious development of the world.’¹ This love which seeks until it finds was for Jesus the love of God. The prodigal is still a son, and, when he comes to himself, and sets out for the father’s house, he finds his father looking for him, and ready to welcome him with the kiss of forgiveness.

In spite of parallels to various aspects of our Lord’s teaching, it thus seems singularly inadequate to speak as if His teaching on God was in no wise new. Our Lord expressed much of His teaching in the framework of Apocalyptic thought. Yet the God whom He proclaimed was not the arbitrary God of Jewish Apocalypse. The God who clothes the flowers with their splendour, who feeds the birds, and whose angels rejoice “over one sinner that repenteth,” is quite other than the God who sits in His distant court, preparing vengeance for His enemies. Nor did our Lord think of God as did the legalists of His time. If His maxims are interpreted as laws, then, indeed, He was a lawgiver whose laws are of terrible severity. “Love your enemies.” “Sell all that thou hast.” No enactment of the Scribes approaches such commands in rigour. But such words were not uttered as new laws. They are rather the *reductio ad absurdum* of the legal conception of God’s relationship with men—the proof that it was impossible to earn God’s favour by

¹ Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, II, p. 520.

obedience to external demands.¹ From the legal standpoint, it was the Pharisee, and not the tax-gatherer, who, after praying in the temple, "went down to his house justified rather than the other."² Our Lord did not so judge. It was not the self-righteous, but those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to whom He promised satisfaction. The love which seeks until it find cannot be satisfied with external obedience. Because God is "the Father in heaven," He would have His children "perfect" as He is.³ Before a Lawgiver we might assert our innocence. Before our Father in heaven; we know that if He call us sons, it is of His grace, not of our merit. The reward which He gives us comes from His kindness, not from our deserving.⁴

All our Lord's teaching about God found its expression in His life. He showed His trust in the almighty God by His works of healing, which were the witness, not of God's power alone, but of God's love. These works were to Him the sign that the kingdom had already broken through.⁵ Where He was, there was the Kingdom. That Kingdom, though unobserved by men, was already in their midst.⁶ Our Lord revealed God, not only by

¹ Cp. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, iv, pp. 1-21.

² Luke xviii. 14.

³ Matt. v. 48. In the parallel passage in Luke vi. 36, we find for "perfect" "merciful." It was in mercy especially that perfection had to be shown.

⁴ Cp. Matt. xx. 1-16.

⁵ Luke xi. 20.

⁶ Luke xvii. 20 f.

proclaiming His forgiveness, but by healing men of their diseases. He made God's love credible to men by His own life of love. The God who seeks until He find, was revealed in the Son who called to Himself those till then excluded from the comforts of religion. It was because He knew God, and was known of Him, that He could bid the weary and heavy laden come to Him to find that yoke of service which would bring rest unto their souls.

According to the testimony of the first three Gospels, the burden of our Lord's teaching was not Himself but God and God's purposes. He called men to share with Him in the joy and service of the Kingdom He proclaimed. Yet even from these Gospels it is clear that He himself belonged to the message which He preached. In His life could be discerned not only God's love, but God's holiness and power. Even impetuous Peter was awed by Him.¹ There was that in Him which caused His disciples to draw back from Him, and to follow amazed.² He was "meek and lowly in heart," and yet He spoke as One adequate for all men's needs. The common people noticed that He spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes, and even a pagan centurion realized His strange power. That power shone through the outer lowliness of His lot, for His was not the power of earthly splendour. He lived in poverty, among poor and obscure men. His popularity soon waned. He was rejected by the people, and hated by its religious leaders. Yet He

¹ Luke v. 8.

² Mark x. 32.

asked for no man's pity, and even in the cruel circumstances of His trial, He bore Himself, not as the sad victim of a tragic fate, but as One who knew Himself equal to His God-given task. He so lived, that when He died, those who had known Him best could believe that He was not their dead Master, but their living Lord.

And the records of His life and death can produce in men to-day a certainty of God which is inseparable from faith in Him. Much in these records is uncertain. Yet, in spite of the problems connected with their study, these Gospels still suffice to enable men to be with Jesus, and so to know the God whom He revealed. As He called God "Father," in Gethsemane and on the Cross itself, so, though it be with faltering speech, we, too, can learn through Him in our lesser sorrows to trust the Father's love. And Christian faith is more than an imitation of the faith of Jesus. Faith in Him becomes part of our faith in God. He is to us a present reality. He reveals God to us, not through His teaching merely, but through all that He did and was.

It is significant that nowhere in the New Testament is faith in Christ conceived as an infringement on God's sole supremacy. On the contrary, faith in God was made more certain and more vivid through faith in Christ, and through the possession of the Spirit.

The first believers who proclaimed the risen Christ as Lord and Saviour did so without any feeling that they were contradicting the strict

monotheism of their Jewish heritage. In their amazed enthusiasm, they did not stay to relate their faith in Christ to their faith in God. It was enough for them that their Master had risen. Soon, as they believed, He would return to bring in the great Restoration. It was left to St. Paul to discover that, since Jesus was both Christ and Lord, the character of God was more gracious than men had deemed. His relationship with men could no longer be regarded as that of law. It had, instead, to be interpreted through the holy love Christ's life and death had shown.

It is in this discovery that we have the distinctive greatness of St. Paul's interpretation of Christianity. He saw, as the first believers in Christianity did not, that Christianity was not only the message of a new Lord ; it involved the transformation of the idea of God. Much of the teaching of our Lord has come down to us through St. Matthew's Gospel. That Gospel reflects the Christianity of the Jewish-Christian Church, and tends to conceal the incongruity of the teaching of Jesus with the legalism of the Scribes. Yet even in this, the most Jewish of the Gospels, that incongruity is clear. Judaism was the religion for a nation. Jesus called men to a relationship with God, which was independent of their national heritage. A modern Jewish scholar complains of Him that He " set up nothing but an ethical religious system bound up with his conception of the Godhead," and, in this way, He " both annulled Judaism as the life-force of the Jewish

nation, and also the nation as a nation. For a religion which possesses only a certain conception of God, and a morality acceptable to all mankind, does not belong to any special nation, and consciously or unconsciously breaks down the barriers of nationality.”¹ That complaint is, from the Jewish standpoint, justified. The God of Jesus was not the God of legalism. And this St. Paul was able to discern with a clearness impossible for those who had not known, as he had known, what Jewish legalism really meant.

Brought up in the strictest and most sombre sect of Judaism, Paul as a Jew had believed that God's relationship to men was one of undeviating recompense. Had Paul been able completely to keep the Law, he might have won a confidence which would have enabled him to stay content in his people's faith. But since the Law concerned not deeds alone but feelings, he found he could not keep the Law.² Since he could not be “just” before God, he could not, from the standpoint of legalism, count on God's favour. God became to him the judge whose demands he could not fulfil—a God he feared but

¹ Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, E.T., p. 390. It is one of the merits of this book that it does help to show why the Jews rejected Jesus—a rejection of which Klausner with all courtesy approves. If the Judaism of our Lord's time were the Judaism which Dr. Montefiore and Professor G. F. Moore describe, that rejection is very hard to understand.

² Rom. vii. 7-23. It may well have been through a report of the teaching of Jesus that Paul discovered the implicates of the tenth commandment. If so, his conversion is an illustration of how effectively our Lord undermined legalism when speaking in what seemed to be legal terms.

could not ignore. To such a one the early Christian preaching of the crucified Jesus as the Messiah of Jewish hope would have been doubly offensive. Not only did it contradict his expectation of the coming of the Messiah in outward splendour. It contradicted also his whole legal conception of God. If the Messiah had indeed died upon the shameful cross, then recompense could no longer be regarded as the final principle of God's relationship with men. When at last the conflict ended, and he knew that the Man whom he had feared and hated was the risen Lord, he knew also that he had to rethink his thought of God. God became for him "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," a God whose character could now be seen in the holy love of the crucified. He knew now that the glory of God was to be seen, not in the splendour of vindictive justice, but in the greater splendour of the face of Jesus Christ.¹ No longer could he think of God as one who "kept account books," reckoning up men's trespasses. He was not a God who needed to be reconciled. He was the God who had taken the initiative in reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."² And because of this, Paul knew he had a word of reconciliation to proclaim which was all the world's concern. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."³ The love of God, shown in the grace of Christ, and experienced in the fellowship of the

¹ Cp. 2 Cor. iv. 6.² 2 Cor. v. 19.³ Rom. v. 8.

Spirit—that was for St. Paul the very centre of the Gospel.

Thus for St. Paul the significance of Christianity lay not only in the common Christian confession that Christ died for our sins and rose again,¹ but in a new conception of God. The difference between Judaism and Christianity was not confined to the Christian belief that Jesus was the Messiah. It concerned the whole content of religious experience. It found its most pointed expression in the Christianization of the idea of God. St. Paul had thought of God with fear, and had anxiously sought to earn His favour. Now, though awe remained, he thought of God with a childlike trust, and with that confidence which comes from faith in a God of grace.

It is this which explains the peculiar intimacy with which St. Paul speaks of God and of God's interest in the lives of men. Not only is the whole course of men's salvation dependent on His gracious will.² He is One who can help in every kind of trouble. He supplies all His children's needs.³ "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is "the Father of mercies" and "the God of all comfort." So St. Paul could bear sorrow without bitterness, for even sorrow could mean a fresh equipment for service due to a new discovery of the meaning of God's love.⁴ In view of such words it seems impossible to hold with Barth that God remained for Paul the "altogether Other," the mysterious and

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3 f.

³ Phil. iv. 19.

² Eph. i. 2-14; cp. ii. 4-10.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 3 f.

awful Unknown about whom all that can be said is this : that He sent His Son to die upon the Cross, because of sin. In the mental distress which preceded his conversion, Paul may have thought of God as " his most dangerous opponent," but it is sheer perversity to say that Paul so thought of God after his conversion.¹ The greatest joy of his life was this : he had the " mind of Christ," and could in Christ explore the meaning and the character of God.

It seems misleading, therefore, to describe St. Paul's Christianity as a Christ-cult. Cult-gods belong to paganism, and the initiate of such cults was not concerned to relate his special god to the shadowy Unknown whom he regarded as the supreme God. It was enough if the worship of his god appealed to his emotions, and calmed the disquiet of his soul.² But to St. Paul it mattered everything who God was. Christ was not for him " another God." God and Christ were inseparable in his experience and his thought, so that he could not think of God apart from Christ, or of Christ apart from God. Christ to him was not a cult-god. He was the image of the Father. His life and death were the full expression of the holy love of God. In Christ he knew God. In Christ he had discovered that not recompense, but holy love, was the final secret of God's character and rule.

The distinctive greatness of St. Paul's interpreta-

¹ *Der Römerbrief*², pp. 250 and 261 ; cp. earlier, pp. 19 f.

² On this attempt to derive Paul's Christianity from pagan cults, see later, pp. 126 ff.

tion has been obscured, not only by the modern attempt to reduce his Christianity to a Christ-cult, but by the older "Paulinisms" with their claim to find in Paul a penal theory of the Atonement.

If Paul interpreted Christ's death by penal justice, then we could not claim that he had discovered God in Christ, for the penal theory subordinates God's grace to His penal justice, and teaches that only when the claims of penal justice had been met, could God's grace be shown. It will be necessary to return to this interpretation when we deal with the meaning of the work of Christ.¹ To the writer it seems that this interpretation is based on a complete misrepresentation of St. Paul's thought. The curse of the "Law" is not for him the curse of God, and, although in his controversy with the Judaizers, St. Paul uses legal terms, his meaning is not that of legalism. God is not the "just" and, in spite of that, the "justifier." On the contrary, God's "righteousness" shows itself in "justifying." But a judge who "justifies the ungodly," who forgives the criminal, is not acting juridically. The terms St. Paul uses are those of law, but the acquittal of which he speaks is not concerned with the custom of the law courts. It is the Father's free forgiveness. The glory of God was not the glory of a vengeful God; it was the glory that is to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

God known in Christ and experienced in the Spirit—that was St. Paul's great discovery. We

¹ See later, pp. 130 ff.

have the same discovery in the Gospel and the First Epistle connected with the name of John. Christ is the exegete of the Father, revealing Him whom no man has seen.¹ Not only does He reveal God ; He is Himself the revelation. To see Him is to have seen God. The supreme proof of God's love is this : that He gave to the world His only-begotten Son.² We know what love is because " He laid down his life for us." And the absolute of love is to be seen not only in the self-surrender of the Son, but in the Father's gift. " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."³ And because he thus knew God in Christ, the writer can with simple confidence affirm that God is love.

(ii) LATER CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

How different might the development of Christianity have been had the discovery that God is known in Christ been conserved by the teachers of the Church. But that could scarcely be. The classic interpretations of Christianity we have been studying were the work of men who had learnt as Jews to think of God as living and personal, and who were saved by their Jewish indifference to philosophy from any temptation to equate the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with the dim absolute of pagan speculation. When the Church became predominantly Gentile, that temptation

¹ John i. 18.

² John iii. 16

³ I. John iii. 16, iv. 10.

became inevitably acute. Converts from paganism, then as now, readily put Christ in the place of the gods they had loved and the demons they had feared. What such converts fail to do is to Christianize their idea of God. Where there has been the worship of many gods, the quest for unity leads, not to the thought of one living God but to the thought of an infinite and attributeless Principle to which the gods are imperfectly related. And the Gentile Church, instead of seeking to know God in Christ, assumed that it already knew what God was, so that all that was required was to interpret Christ in terms of God and man, without pausing to consider the new meaning of both God and man which the revelation of Christ has brought. So we find that an early Apologist like Justin Martyr, whilst he sought to win to the allegiance of Christ the educated pagans of his time, yet spoke as if he, like the pagans whom he addressed, thought of God as incomprehensible and nameless, without desire or feeling. The Apologists, having the Old Testament as their Bible, did, indeed, try to unite with this conception that of God as the Creator and Ruler of the world. But it was impossible to bring these two ideas of God into a true unity. As we shall see when dealing with the doctrine of Christ's Person, this failure to interpret God by Christ led to an inadequate interpretation of Christ Himself. He was the Logos through whom the supreme God was linked with the created world. But the place assigned to the divine Word was far less than that given by

Paul or John.¹ He was not conceived as fully one with God. He was another God, inferior to the highest God. Even Irenæus, who retained the fullness of New Testament Christianity more fully than others of his age, could speak of Christians having a harder law to obey than Jews, for they have more to obey. They have not only to believe in God the Father, but also in the Son who has appeared. ² There is here a grave departure from the insight of such a one as St. Paul. With St. Paul, as we have seen, faith in Christ was not an added burden to faith in God. Faith in God—the God whom he had learnt to know in Christ—was possible only through faith in Christ.

It would be unjust to blame the early teachers of the Church for this failure to interpret God in a fully Christian way. Christianity is so strange and new that it is inevitable that in a pagan world only part of its meaning should be at first discerned. But respect for the ancient Fathers, and admiration for their achievements, ought not to preclude us from recognizing their failure here. Only by this recognition can we ourselves escape the evil consequences which still persist.

This failure tended to take a different form in East and West. In the East, the influence of Græco-Oriental philosophy led to the belief that the Divine was not only ineffable, but “impassible” and “apathetic”—incapable of suffering or of

¹ For a fuller discussion cp. the writer's *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, chap. iii.

² *Against Heresies*, IV, xxviii, 2.

feeling.¹ In the West, philosophic speculation had less influence, but the idea of God was dominated by the legal praxis of the Church.

We shall see, when we turn to the doctrine of the Person of Christ, how grave were the difficulties caused by the identification of God with the "impassible" Absolute. Arianism was not an accident. It was the inevitable outcome of a partly pagan view of God. The Church rejected the pagan view of Christ as a creature who yet was to be worshipped, but it failed to Christianize its idea of God. As Canon Streeter has said, "So far as the imagination of the Church is concerned, it has been really the Arian who triumphed." "The Christian Creed acknowledges but one God, and one quality of Godhead—so far Athanasius won his cause; but the Christian *imagination* has been driven by the postulate of the impassibility of God to worship two. Side by side sit throned in heaven God the Father, omnipotent, unchangeable, impassible, and, on His right hand, God the Son, *passus, crucifixus, mortuus, resurrectus*. What is this but Arianism, routed in the field of intellectual definition, triumphing in the more important sphere of the object of the belief?"²

If this failure to Christianize the idea of God

¹ So Clement of Alexandria declared that of God "we know not what He is, but what He is not" and speaks of Christ as "entirely impassible; inaccessible to any movement of feeling—either pleasure or pain." *Miscellanies*, v, 11, and vi, 9.

² From an article on "The Suffering of God" in the *Hibbert Journal*, Apr. 1914.

belonged only to the past, no reference to it would have been necessary, for we are here concerned not with the past but with the present. The influence of that ancient failure still remains. For large sections of the Christian Church the doctrine of the "impassibility" of God is still a dogma. And it is this which explains much of the present confusion of Christian thinking. There are many in our Churches for whom, though Christ means much, God means little.

The Church of the West accepted the dogmas formulated in connexion with Eastern controversies, but it accepted them as mysteries to be received as part of obedience to the Church rather than as doctrines in immediate relation to practical piety. From early times, the practical piety of the West centred in the thought of God as the supreme Lawgiver and the avenging Judge. Western writers speak little of "corruption" and the need of "deification"; much of "debts" and "guilt." A legal conception of God means always uncertainty of salvation, for no man can claim that he has earned salvation. Since Christ's work was regarded as availing only for pre-baptismal sin, the Church had to provide a penitential praxis by which the consequences of sin could be endured on earth, instead of being expiated by terrible torments in the life to come. But still the uncertainty of salvation remained. That uncertainty Augustine sought to remove by speaking of God's grace as irresistible. Salvation and damnation alike depended, not on

man's merits, but on God's predestination. Those "whom He justly predestined to punishment" would be damned. Those only could be saved "whom He mercifully predestined to grace."¹ Once again we notice the failure to Christianize the idea of God. It is impossible to relate this arbitrary despot of Augustine's theory with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seeks the lost until He find it.

Practical piety owed much to the recollection of the human life of Jesus which was more vivid in the West than in the East. Yet even this recollection failed to lead men to interpret God by Christ. We think of a book so justly prized as Anselm's *Why did God become Man? (Cur deus homo?)* By that book Anselm helped to dispel the crude view that Christ had saved men by paying for them a ransom to the devil.

Yet not all was gain. Anselm taught that Christ's death was the satisfaction paid to God for the injury done to His honour by human sin. In this way, God appears as "the offended party" who received from the voluntary death of the God man a "super-abundant" satisfaction. Anselm does, indeed, make some reference to God's love, but since he represents Christ as giving and God as receiving, his theory, as a whole, strengthened the popular belief in the dissimilarity in character between God the Father and God the Son, and the evil effect of this belief can still be seen in Christendom to-day.

¹ *Enchiridion*, c.

We have yet another instance of the failure to Christianize the idea of God in that masterpiece of medieval theology, the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. This vast work begins with an attempt to demonstrate by means of a modified Aristotelian philosophy the Being and the Attributes of God. Even the attribute of love is discussed without reference to God's gift of Christ. Natural reason thus provides him with the truths of God's existence, perfection, goodness, infinity, unity and love. Revelation comes in to add to the conception of God thus attained the knowledge that He is triune. In this, Thomas has been followed not only by Catholic but by Protestant theologians. But the method obscures the distinctive meaning of the revelation of God in Christ. Through that revelation, God is known through Christ in the Spirit. But that revelation is not primarily the revelation that God is triune, but the more wonderful and gracious truth of God's holy and redeeming love, which we can only rightly know in Christ.

It was this discovery that Luther made. Wherever else he failed, he did succeed in discovering for himself and helping others to discover the holy love of God in Christ. "Look," he writes, "on this man Jesus Christ, who setteth Himself out to be a mediator and saith, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and I will refresh you.' Thus doing, thou shalt see the love, goodness and sweetness of God; thou shalt see His wisdom, power and majesty, sweetened

and tempered to thy capacity.”¹ If we think of God and Christ separately so that we fail to see in the love of Christ the love of God, then we have “bartered away the true God who wills to be found and laid hold of nowhere save in this Christ.” Of the Roman Church he complained, that “although it had preserved the dogma of Christ’s divinity, it had never imagined” that we ought to learn to recognize God in Christ.²

That was a task which Protestantism also for long failed to undertake. And for this Luther was himself in part responsible. No one since St. Paul had spoken with more confidence of the grace of God revealed in Christ, and known to faith. But he spoke also of the *deus absconditus*, “the hidden God.” Doubtless Otto is right when he explains his retention of this idea less as a survival of medieval scholasticism than as an expression of the *mysterium tremendum*, the Divine which awakens in us awe. Later, Luther himself taught that by our trust in the “revealed God” and in His word, the “hidden God” is gradually revealed to us. But Luther was not content to retain this conception as a “numinous” expression of that awe of God which no trust in Him can quite remove. He rationalized it, and in his polemic against free-will, so emphasized the despotic omnipotence of this “hidden God,” as to make Him appear more like the Allah of Muham-

¹ On Gal. i. 3.

² For these and similar passages see Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*—the classic presentation of this phase of Luther’s thought, E.T.², pp. 146–72.

mad's preaching than the God of Jesus Christ.¹ And Luther's occasional and paradoxical teaching on God's arbitrary and predestinating power received later in Calvin a more terrifying, because colder, and more consistent, treatment.² This assertion of God's absolute power expressed for Calvin his own utter feeling of dependence upon God. It gave to him and to his followers the courage needed to withstand the persecutions of a dominant Church. But, once again, we have the failure to Christianize the idea of God. In our Lord's teaching, the omnipotence of God is the omnipotence of a love which was adequate to every need. The God who not only foresaw but foreordained the fall of Adam and who, by His *horribile decretum*, predestines men yet unborn to everlasting damnation is not the God whom we have learnt to know in Christ. And, as we shall see when dealing with the work of Christ, the penal theory, as Calvin taught it, though it asserted the love of the Son, obscured the Father's love.

Later, Protestant theologians revived the Aristotelianism which Luther had attacked. The revealed theology was made once more to rest upon the foundations of natural theology. The vast systems of Protestant scholasticism are a witness to the architectonic genius of their authors. In these

¹ Cp. his wild statements on God's arbitrary power in his *De seruo arbitrio*, written against Erasmus.

² In the first edition of the *Institutes* of 1536 there is scarcely a reference to predestination. Calvin owed the doctrine to Augustine, whom he took to be in this a true interpreter of Paul.

systems, although the Reformation conception of faith as trust in a gracious God was formally retained, faith was once more reduced to an assent to teachings beyond the comprehension of ordinary Christians. Teachings about God hid God from men. Luther's criticism of the Roman Church was equally applicable to later Protestant orthodoxy. It preserved the dogma of Christ's divinity; it did not imagine that "we ought to learn to recognize God in Christ."

It is to the task of recognizing God in Christ that the most fruitful modern theology has been addressed. That modern theology has had its source in the work of Schleiermacher, who was the founder, not so much of a school, as of an epoch. In an age when the discussion of religion had largely ceased to be religious, Schleiermacher sought to lead his contemporaries away from the intellectualism of the Illumination¹ movement with its Natural Theology, and from the intellectualism of orthodoxy, which superimposed on Natural Theology a Revealed Theology which was inadequately related to religious experience. It was the distinctive nature of religious experience that he emphasized. His first book, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, published in 1799, was an attempt to show that religion had a value in itself, apart from its service to correct opinion or good morals. "Belief must be something different from a mixture of opinions about God and the world, and of precepts for one life or for

¹ The German counterpart of English Deism.

two. Piety cannot be an instinct, craving for a mess of metaphysical and ethical crumbs."¹ It is a sense of the infinite, which is unconcerned with the strife of schools. This book was written by a Romanticist for Romanticists and was unduly influenced by the æsthetic rationalism of the Romanticist movement. In 1821 he largely corrected the defects of his early book in his massive work on *The Christian Faith*, in which his deepened view of Christianity found its consummate expression.²

The orthodoxy of Schleiermacher's time was too purely "objective." It made of theology a system of truths but failed to show how these truths were related to Christian experience. In reaction, Schleiermacher's treatment was too exclusively "subjective." Recognizing that the distinctive element in Christianity is this, that "in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth," Schleiermacher began not with the given but with the experienced. This method of approach was inadequate even to the religious self-consciousness whose utterances the book sought to express in ordered form. And nowhere are the defects of this method more patent than in its treatment of the doctrine of God. Instead of the exploration of the revelation of God in Christ, we have a discussion of God's attributes as

¹ Oman's translation, p. 31.

² For a brief account of this book see the writer's *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, pp. 164-73. An English translation of this book appeared in 1928 under the editorship of Drs. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart.

known in Christian experience. The book thus tends to produce the impression that the meaning of God is exhausted in the experience of man. Schleiermacher came himself to realize his partial failure here. In a letter written in 1829, he admitted that a better approach would be to deal first with the Father as revealed in Christ, so that the first assertion about God would be this: that through Christ He had renewed humanity and founded the Kingdom. Schleiermacher felt that he could not himself thus reconstruct his system, but he looked forward to the time when someone should appear who would apply this principle to theology with a success which he himself had lacked.¹

Schleiermacher's immediate influence was checked by the growth of Hegelianism, with its tendency once more to resolve Christianity into a series of ideas. In Germany Hegelianism soon ran its course, and Ritschl became the dominant influence in German theology. It is the present fashion to deride Ritschlianism, but to Ritschl the Church owes this much at least; Ritschl did, what Schleiermacher had hoped someone would do: he brought the Church back from all less urgent tasks to the exploration of the revelation of God in Christ.

¹ In his second *Sendschreiben* to Dr. Lücke (see the writer's *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, p. 172). One reason Schleiermacher gave for not thus reconstructing his system was his fear that if he thus began with the revelation of God in Christ, all else would seem an anticlimax. That is a difficulty which all who thus begin have to face, but an æsthetic reason of this kind should surely not prevent the approach which best brings out the content of the Christian Gospel.

Up to the period of the war, Schleiermacher and Ritschl were the great masters of German theology.

Even before the war, there were signs that the movement connected with the great names of Schleiermacher and of Ritschl was beginning to lose influence. The genial "liberalism" of the left wing of the movement had won great popularity, but it had tended to obscure the wonder of God's grace, and to speak as if human needs could be the measure of God's greatness. Rightly did Schaefer protest that theology should be not "anthropocentric," nor even "Christocentric," but "theocentric." Faith has for its one object God; if Christ be, too, the object of our faith, then that is because He belongs to the Divine. It is God as He reveals Himself, not man as he thinks and aspires, which is the first concern of theology. It is through forgetfulness of this that there "has been a belittlement of God in theology. Little man has cast upon God his shadow."¹

This reaction has found still more influential expression in two books of which we have already spoken, Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, and Barth's *Commentary on Romans*.² Otto emphasized that the distinctive element in religion is awe. Barth, with violent paradoxes, taught that God is "the altogether Other," the completely Unknowable. We cannot speak even of faith's knowledge of Him,

¹ *Theozentrische Theologie*, I², pp. 210 ff. (the first edition was published in 1909).

² See earlier, pp. 19 ff.

for faith is a "mere vacuity." The God of whom Barth speaks is more like "the hidden God"¹ of one phase of Luther's thought than the God revealed in Christ, whose grace Luther, like St. Paul, delighted to trust and praise. Now that Barth writes as a theologian and not a prophet, he speaks with more caution. But even now he has little to say of filial trust, and, if he speaks of God as Father, does so because God as the Source of Deity is the Father of the eternal Son.²

The Neo-Calvinism of Barth and Brunner is a necessary corrective to the modern tendency to speak more of religious experience than of revelation. Brunner's criticism of later Lutheranism is applicable to much Anglo-Saxon Christianity. "The whole anthropocentric presentation" is "religious egoism. Man stands at the centre with his interest in salvation, not God and His honour, His revelation; God is reduced to the fulfiller of human needs." He is "the guarantee of the worth of human life. And that is not the view of the Bible." "The Bible is a book in which God's honour comes first, and man's salvation second."³ So Barth writes, "The meaning and the possibility, the subject-matter of Dogmatics, is not Christian faith, but the Word of God." "Where this relation is reversed, there is falsification, and falsification along the whole line and at every point. Dogmatics is

¹ See earlier, p. 78.

² *Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, pp. 171-82.

³ *Der Mittler*, pp. 367 f.

not an hour-glass which can be reversed and run on just the same!"¹

Here the Neo-Calvinists seem right. It is God as revealed, not God as surmised, with whom as Christians we have to do. Yet it seems unnecessary to jettison all that may be learnt from Christian thought on God from the time of Schleiermacher up to the rise of the Barthian School. Truth cannot be found by the abrupt dilemma of "either-or"—either revelation or experience. God's honour is primary, but God's honour is manifested in men's salvation. God reveals Himself, but that revelation can be known only as it is experienced. Yet though we know God through our experience of Him, we dare not claim that our experience can be the measure of His meaning. The Christian conception of God may not be trivialized. It is not the mere intuition of the finest spiritual genius of our race. It comes from God's self-revelation—a revelation which is to be received, not with trust alone, but with humble awe.

It has seemed necessary to refer to the development of the Christian conception of God, for it may teach us much both by its failure and by its success. No part of theology has been so pedantic and unsatisfying as that which treats of the Christian doctrine of God. We need to break away from the traditional presentation of this doctrine, and try to reach a conception more congruous with Christian

¹ *Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, p. 87.

faith, and more capable of being preached. The common division of this doctrine into the Being, Attributes and Trinity of God obscures the distinctive nature of the Christian revelation of God. The "Being" of God is spoken of as mere Being, and to this meaningless abstraction have been added "attributes" derived by the "ways of negation, eminence and causality." Such a conception of God is congruous with the partly pagan ideal of flight from the world. It is incongruous with the Christian ideal of fellowship with the God who has revealed Himself to men. Not thus may we interpret the Christian conception of God as revealed in the Son, and experienced in the Spirit.

(iii) GOD AS POWER, HOLINESS AND LOVE

Christianity takes over from Judaism its conception of the living God who is holy and mighty. And it is the distinctive paradox of Christianity that the holy God has become the God who is "near"; the almighty, awful God is the God of grace. The holy God is the God of love. Although the phrase "holy love" is not to be found in the New Testament, no phrase so well expresses its conception of God's character.

We do not get to know a person by studying a summary list of his qualities, and the elaborate catalogues of God's attributes to be found in the orthodox theologies of the past do little to bring out the meaning of God. If we speak of the attributes

of God, we do so only as a convenient means of emphasizing various aspects of His character. And using "attributes" in this sense, we may speak of the attributes of God's power, holiness and love.

Our Lord, as we have seen, had no need to emphasize God's power, for He addressed Himself to Jews, who had already learnt to think of God as the almighty creator and sustainer of the world. Against the pagan idea of the world as an entity existing in independence of God, Judaism asserted that God had "made the world out of nothing,"¹ and this became one of the commonplaces of Christianity.² The world is in dependence upon God, and serves His ends. Our Lord retained to the full the Jewish emphasis upon God's power, and, from various points of view, proclaimed His perfect adequacy. Yet He illustrated God's power, not by reference to arbitrary exhibitions of it, but in connexion with the needs of men, and the purposes of the Kingdom. He who clothed the flowers in their splendour could provide for His children's wants. It was the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom to the "little flock" of Jesus, and already the powers of that Kingdom were to be seen in the works of healing which Jesus did. All

¹ ² *Macc.* vii. 28 (*ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεός*). The phrase occurs in the confession of faith of the wife of Eleazar, who saw her husband and seven sons martyred by Antiochus for refusing to take part in idolatrous rites. It is thus introduced not as a novelty of speculation, but as a generally received doctrine of Judaism.

² Cp. *Rom.* iv. 17; *Heb.* xi. 3. An illustration of the influence of this idea on popular Christianity is given in the line of the carol "Nowell," "That hath made heaven and earth of naught."

things were possible to God. So our Lord declared, but the "all things" of which He spoke were things that concerned the Father's grace. A brilliant philosopher of recent times has thought it worth while to set forth at length the things which God cannot do, and so to seek to banish the conception of an omnipotent God.¹ His discussion has its uses in so far as it concerns the extravagant assertions of God's omnipotence to be found in some theologians. But it is no part of the Christian belief in God's omnipotence to assert that God can override the laws of Identity, Contradiction and the Excluded Middle. The omnipotence of God does not mean for serious Christian thought that He can make two and two equal five. It does mean that His will is supreme, and that all things depend on Him.

And God is holy. Holiness in the Old Testament was often used in a ritual sense, and some Christian theologians would have us cease to speak of the holiness of God.² But thus to cease to speak of God's holiness is to isolate Christianity unduly from common religious experience, and to conceal its distinctive paradox. Religion, at its highest ranges,

¹ *Some Dogmas of Religion*, pp. 202-20. Dr. McTaggart inclined to belief in a non-omnipotent God. "When the non-omnipotent God is also taken as non-creative, there seems to me, as I have said, only one reason why we should not believe in his existence, namely, that there is no reason why we should believe in it."

² So Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii, E.T., 273 f. Ritschl's view is rejected by Ritschlian theologians like J. Kaftan (*Dogmatik*, pp. 203 f.), and Haering (*The Christian Faith*, E.T., pp. 343 ff.), whilst Stephan, the author of one of the latest Ritschlian Dogmatics, under Otto's influence, begins his discussion of the character of God with the assertion of His holiness (*Glaubenslehre*, pp. 80-3).

is concerned with the True, the Beautiful and the Good. But its distinctive category is the Holy. It is the Holy which arouses in men the sense of awe, and is experienced as an immediate reality.¹ No religion gives to the Holy so rich an ethical meaning as does Christianity, and yet the Holy is not identical with the Good. We do not stand before God merely as the ethically imperfect before the ethically Perfect but as the profane before the Holy. God is perfect Goodness, but that Goodness arouses in us the peculiar religious response of awe. And in this, as in all else, Christ is the revealer of the Father. We can see in the Gospels, not only the awe with which He thought of God, but the awe which He Himself inspired in men. And as we read His life, and remember anew His death, we, too, may be awed anew before the holiness of God.

This almighty, holy God is the God of love. That is the strange paradox of the Christian message. The God in whose power Christ trusted, the God whose awful will He sought to do, though it led Him to the Cross, is the God of love. It is here that we have the novelty of the Christian Gospel. Other Jews had spoken of God's tenderness and care. Our Lord made the thought of God's fatherly love, not occasional, but normative. There is no need further to emphasize this attribute of love. Were we to do so, we should have to repeat all

¹ Cp. Windelband's essay "Das Heilige" in his *Präludiven*, pp. 356-82, and also Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy (Das Heilige)*.

that we have written on our Lord's revelation of God, and on its classic statement in the rest of the New Testament. God for Jesus was a God who seeks until He finds, and although Jesus rarely spoke of the love of God, both His teaching and His life and death had that love of God as their distinctive meaning. The love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord became the theme of the first Christian preaching, and the Christian Gospel finds its summary expression in the sublime words of St. John that "God is love."

Power, holiness and love—these are the three prime attributes which Christianity assigns to God. For convenience of treatment, we have spoken of these as three attributes of God. But they are attributes which cannot be understood in isolation. We cannot speak, as theologians have sometimes done, as if these attributes expressed separate activities of God. We may not, for instance, assign the creation and preservation of the world to God's power, His punitive reaction against sin to His holiness and His redemptive activity to His love. The manifestation of His power in the creation and preservation of the world is conditioned by His holy love: His judgements are the judgements not of holiness only but of love, and the love active in men's redemption is a love both holy and almighty.

The history of theology affords many and painful instances of the errors which arise when either God's power, holiness or love is treated in isolation. Thus men have thought to flatter God by saying that

He can do anything. This identification of God with the absolute of power has made Him appear as an arbitrary despot, neither holy nor loving. A Muslim tradition narrates that when God created man from a lump of clay, He broke it into two parts, and throwing one into hell, said, "These to eternal fire, and I care not," and throwing the other into heaven, He said, "These to Paradise, and I care not." Such a narrative we feel at once to be a dreadful blasphemy against God, but we find the same blasphemy in Christian teachers. We have seen how Augustine taught that the number of the elect was fixed; all else were predestined to punishment,¹ and how Calvin followed him in this. But a God of arbitrary and capricious power is not a God of love. A medieval Schoolman declared that God could do everything which did not involve contradiction, and, in illustration of this, affirms that "if God sinned, He would not sin." "God could condemn the blessed Virgin and the whole multitude of the angels or the saints."² But that is what God could not do, for He is love.

Much of the popular misunderstanding of the Christian revelation has arisen from this failure to relate God's power to His holiness and love. A child, taught that God can do everything, will not unnaturally ask, "Can God die?" And such

¹ See earlier, p. 76.

² Duns Scotus in his *Centiloquium Theologicum*, *Conclusio V*, quoted by Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 388. Cp. Luther's wild assertions in the absolute omnipotence of the "hidden God" already referred to on p. 78.

questions are not found only on the lips of children. It is this belief that God can do anything which accounts for much of the bitterness and perplexity with which many bear their sorrows. "Why did not God prevent the war?" men ask. The question is a natural one, but it is not asked from the point of view of the Christian conception of God. The power of God is conditioned by His love. And love does not coerce. Because God is love, He treats us as persons, not as things. We can choose, and choose wrong. Suspicion, hatred and greed issue inevitably in disaster. Sin leads to the suffering, not only of the sinner, but of the innocent. Here, too, Christ is the image of the Father's heart. We may see God's power in His Christ did not compel men to accept His message. He manifested the power of God by His works of healing, and by His saving influence on men. And in His own life He showed how love is stronger than hate. The enmity of men could bring Him to the Cross; it could not cause Him to swerve from the path of right. And the Cross which seemed to show His weakness has become the symbol of His power. Lifted up, He draws men to Him. In Him the power of God has been revealed—the power, not of an irresistible force, but of holy love.

And the errors which have arisen from thinking of God's holiness and His love in isolation have been no less grave than those which have come from isolating the conception of His power.

Of the evil effects of isolating God's holiness from His love we have already spoken, and will have again to speak when, in the next chapter, we pass on to the consideration of the Work of Christ. As we have seen, the rightful awe men feel before the mysterious Majesty of God found expression in the ancient Church in the conception of God as the Absolute of being, "impassible" and "apathetic," incapable of suffering and feeling. This conception, derived from pagan speculation, is incompatible with the Christian revelation of God as love. If the Christ who shared our human sorrow, and who suffered on the Cross, be, indeed, the image of the Father, then it is impossible to hold that God is incapable of feeling. Since in Christ we know that the holy God is the God of love, we dare not say that He is untouched by sorrow. Nor may we so isolate God's holiness, as to represent Him as the terrible avenger, inflicting on men through all eternity punishment, not remedial, but solely retributive. Nor may we speak as if God's holiness and love were in opposition: God's holiness could be content with the destruction of a sinful race; God's love desired to save some men at least, and God's love attained its desire by providing in the vicarious punishment of Christ the satisfaction of God's holiness. So some have spoken of God's relationship with men, whilst others, with still graver consequences, have so spoken as to suggest that the love by which men are saved is the love of the Son and not of the Father, for the Father sought only satisfaction to His injured

honour, or the appeasement of His punitive justice.¹ Such grave misunderstandings of the character of God spring from the attempt to keep apart God's holiness and His love. We cannot thus dissect the character of God. God's holiness, like His love, is concerned with men's salvation, whilst retribution is an expression of His love as well as of His holiness.

In recent years there has been the attempt to speak as if love alone were the expression of God's character. If by love we mean the holy love of which John spoke when he declared that "God is love," then love may be an adequate description of the character of God. But it is possible to speak of God's love in a way which is irreligious, for it lacks the sense of awe, and is sentimental, in that it contradicts the stern facts of revelation and experience. We remember Heine's words, "God will pardon me. *C'est son métier*. That is His business." And many a modern Christian, though he would condemn the flippant cynicism of Heine's words, yet comforts himself with the same superficial view of the nature of God's love. But the Father of whom our Lord spoke is not the indulgent father of many a modern home. He is the heavenly Father who cares more for His children's character than for their comfort. The love of God is a love which is holy—a love which inspires not trust alone, but awe. In the past much popular misunder-

¹ I refer here, not to the guarded statement of great thinkers, like Anselm and Calvin, but to the popular impression produced by their theories.

standing has been due to the isolation of God's omnipotence or holiness. As grave in recent years has been the misunderstanding due to the isolation of God's love. When God is spoken of as a sort of Santa Claus, it is not surprising that belief in God should later seem a childish fancy. It is not enough that we should affirm that God is love, unless by love we mean a love which is holy.

And this holy love is almighty. Our age is learning to reject the idea of God as sheer omnipotence, whilst the conception of Him as "impassible" has less influence than it had. Yet not all is gain, if we so speak of a suffering God as to imply that He is the passive victim of the world or of the race's sin. Christianity is summed up in the Cross, but it is the Cross as seen, not on Good Friday, but on Easter Day. Though God be not "impassible," yet His is the blessedness of a holy love whose power is equal to its gracious purposes. As yet we see but dimly. Goodness and love often appear to be weak and ineffective. Disease and suffering take their tragic toll. Yet through Christ we may believe that the God of this mysterious universe is the Father of power, holiness and love—power which is the power of holy love, and holy love which has the power for the perfection of that Kingdom which is the goal of God's purposes, and our own highest good and dearest hope.

"To no man hath God given power to declare his works: And who shall trace out his mighty deeds? Who shall number the strength of his

majesty ? And who shall also tell out his mercies ? ”¹ But although we know God only in part, yet through Christ our knowledge of Him is true. A little child cannot read his father’s books or understand his plans, yet he may know and trust his father’s love. And imperfect as is our apprehension of God, it is enough for our pilgrim way. We have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In Him we know God’s power and holiness and love. And this knowledge we have, not through a past revelation only, but through a present experience ; a life in the Spirit which death will not interrupt, but consummate. To these various aspects of the central splendour of God revealed in Christ and through the Spirit we have now to turn.

¹ *Ecclus. xviii. 4 f.*

III

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

A. THE CHRISTIAN ESTIMATE OF MAN

THE Christian Gospel is not only a revelation of God. It is a message of salvation, for the revelation of God is received through the saving work of Christ, and in the experience of the Spirit. That message of salvation involves a certain estimate of man's nature and his need, and, before we proceed to speak of Salvation through Christ and of the Life in the Spirit, it is necessary to refer briefly to this estimate.

It is only in this secondary sense that we can speak of a Christian doctrine of Man and Sin. Much that the Church has taught under these heads has been derived, not from the Christian revelation, but from the extraneous world-views with which that revelation has been associated. The Bible is no more a handbook of psychology than it is of science, and it is as impossible to speak of a "revealed psychology" as it would be to speak of a "revealed natural science." The religious estimate of man and his need involved in the Christian message of salvation has thus to be distinguished from the world-views in which that estimate has found expression.

Our Lord's teaching ministry lay among Jews who had behind them the long development of Old Testament religion and who had already learnt to think of sin as an offence against a just and holy God. In later Judaism the sin of man was more sombrely interpreted than is usual in the Old Testament, and by many was connected with the first sin of Adam.

It was to a people perplexed by the problem of sin and evil that our Lord addressed His teaching. Yet He showed no interest in theories about the origin and spread of sin. Nor did He speak about "humanity" or "man." Instead, He dealt with men and women in their individual needs. We find no trace in His words of the tremendous doctrines of later teachers of the Church. Nowhere does He speak of original sin or guilt or suggest that because of Adam's sin mankind was a mass of perdition. Equally, we can find in His words no support for the sentimental and æsthetic view of man held by some modern writers. His hope for men did not spring from what He saw of man's natural nobility; it sprang from His sense of God's power and love.

God was the holy Father. That, as we have seen, is central in His teaching. Yet, though God is our Father, we have to become His sons, for our relationship with God has been broken by our sin. Our Lord did not teach the universality of sin. He assumed it, as something which required no teaching. It was with a call to repentance that He

began His proclamation of the Kingdom's nearness. Only in irony did He speak of those that needed no repentance. Before God we can claim no merit. When we have done all, we are still "unprofitable servants." The prayer which God approves is the prayer of the penitent, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Men are "evil." It is the Father in heaven alone who is perfect.

Yet our Lord bids us be perfect even as our Father is. He does not excuse our human weakness, as some Prophets and Psalmists had, on the ground that we are "flesh." He makes of men the severest demands. He is not content with the fulfilment of the Law's behests. He requires an inner purity and love. Taken in isolation, His ethical teaching is of unparalleled severity. But it cannot thus be isolated. His teaching was not the promulgation of a new and harder law. It was the revelation of the Father's grace, of the love which seeks until it finds, which requires that as the Father is, so shall the children be. The Jesus of whom the Synoptic Gospels speak was not a gloomy fanatic, despairing of this present age and postponing to the future the first signs of God's power and grace. Men were "lost," but He had come to seek and to save the lost. Already the blessings of God's Kingdom were available for men. The Kingdom of God was in men's midst. Fearing God, men need have no other fear. To His little flock the Father would give the Kingdom. And though He spoke of judgement, He conceived His

message as Good News. His Kingdom was the highest good which could come to men ; to win it, no price was too high to pay.

For the sake of the Kingdom men might have in that time of crisis to renounce the closest ties of kinship. There were those who had to be eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, who in the interests of its work had to be unmarried, as Jesus was. Yet we find in our Lord's words no trace of asceticism. Sin in His teaching is not sensuousness but disobedience. Marriage made of man and wife one flesh, and united them in indissoluble union. The Jewish teachers of His time laid much stress on the physical obligations of marriage. Yet our Lord's words nowhere suggest that He regarded married life as inferior to the virgin state. He condemned the self-confidence to which wealth can lead, and exposed the temptations which beset the rich. But He did not shun the hospitality of the prosperous, and, at a feast, could be a welcome guest.

Our Lord gave no formal teaching about sin, and spoke more of God's grace than of man's needs. Yet the Gospels show more clearly than any of the later theories of the Church the tragic contrast between what man might be, and what man is. The Gospels are the record not only of the perfect manhood of Jesus but of the sin of men. The death of Christ which showed in its completeness our Lord's moral majesty showed also what the sin of man can be. The bitter hatred of the religious

leaders of the nation, the defection of the people, the desertion of the disciples, the cowardice of the Roman Governor—these things reveal the need of man by showing what men have done, and still can do. We have, then, in the teaching of Jesus no formal statement of man's nature and man's sin. But man's possibilities of good and evil are revealed in the Gospel story. Called to be God's sons, we may reject the good, and that rejection finds its most awful expression in the crucifixion of the Saviour.

It is clear that it is not possible to derive from the Synoptic Gospels those doctrines of man and sin which became prevalent in the later Church. These doctrines claim their authority from certain phases of the teaching of St. Paul. But these phases of St. Paul's teaching belong not so much to his Christian message, as to the world-views he inherited from Judaism. In the Judaism of that time, there were those who looked forward with naïve hope to the Day of Judgement, when Israel would be vindicated and its enemies destroyed. Others, with a deeper sense of their own need, anticipated that Day with a gloomy sense of their own failure and of the sternness of God's judgement. This present age was evil, and in its evil Jews, like Gentiles, shared. As the writer of 4 Ezra later put it, "Blessed are they who come into the world, and obey thy commandments." But "who is there of those who have come into the world that has not sinned?" "The coming Age should delight bring

to few, but torment unto many. For the evil heart has grown up in us which has estranged us from God and brought us into destruction." "O thou Adam, what hast thou done? For though it was thou that sinned, the fall was not thine alone, but ours also, who are thy descendants. For how does it profit in that the eternal age is promised to us whereas we have done the works that bring death."¹ Thus for this writer, Jews as well as Gentiles shared in Adam's sin.

Like many of his age, Paul conceived of the need of man, not abstractly, but concretely. Over this present evil age there ruled Sin and Death, which had gained their hold over the race through Adam's act of disobedience. Demons hovered round to hurt. Chief of them all was Satan, who, disguising himself as an angel of light, had seduced Eve at the first.² At his conversion, Paul knew that the "Age to come" had dawned. God had manifested Himself to men in a splendour of grace which surpassed Paul's highest hopes. Already Christians might live as God's children, and be in Christ, and in the Spirit. But Paul's judgement of this present age remained what it had been. Those who, as unredeemed by Christ, belonged to this present age, lived in a sphere which was separated from God, and ruled over by Sin and Death and

¹ 4 Ezra (the 2 Esdras of the R.V. Apocrypha), vii. 45 ff., 118 f. In its present form the compilation is subsequent to Paul, but it is the product of tendencies in Judaism to which Paul had close affinity.

² 2 Cor. xi. 14 and 3.

evil powers.¹ It is from Paul's inherited world-view that later teachers of the Church claimed to derive their authority in Scripture for their doctrines of the Fall and of the flesh.

In St. Paul's writings the Fall is only mentioned twice,² and in each case the reference is incidental. In Romans v. 12-21 he contracts the effects of the fall of Adam and of the work of Christ. Through Adam's disobedience, Sin gained its dominion over the human race, and, consequent on Sin's entry, Death entered, too, as Sin's ally, sharing in Sin's tyranny over men. In the other passage, 1 Cor. xv., the reference to the Fall is even slighter. Adam was only a "living soul"; Christ was a "life-giving Spirit." In Adam all die; in Christ all are made alive. The life which comes to us from Adam is mortal; the life which comes to us from Christ is blessed and eternal.

In St. Paul's references to the flesh we have less a formal teaching than a transcript of his experience. So closely does he connect flesh with sin, that some have held that he shared the Græco-Oriental view that flesh as material was inherently evil. That seems a misrepresentation of his thought. He can bid his converts glorify God in their bodies, which are meant to be the temples of the Holy Spirit,³

¹ On this world-view see the writer's *Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 122-52.

² The phrase in Eph. ii. 3, "children of wrath," has no reference to the effects of the Fall. It is a Hebraism, meaning "those under Wrath," and describes the pre-Christian state of some of the Christians he is addressing.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 18 ff.

and can speak of flesh, as well as spirit, being free from all defilement.¹ Yet the works of the flesh had become evil. Sin reigned over it, and the flesh had become the willing instrument of its tyranny.² "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God."³ That judgement was not due to Græco-Oriental dualism. It was due to his own experience of his nation's proneness to sin, a proneness in which he believed all men shared.

What is significant in St. Paul is not the world-view which he inherited. It is his discovery that in Christ there had come a message of salvation which was available to all alike who believe in Him, whether they were Jew or Gentile, bond or free. For all alike Christ had died. Because of this, St. Paul could share his Master's hope for men. All alike could become the sons of God and share already in the resources of the Age to Come. He was in Christ Jesus. He had his part already in the life that was eternal, whose content was given in Christ. Even an obscure man like Tertius could learn St. Paul's high language, and speak of being "in the Lord."⁴ That, and not the relics of his Judaism, was the greatness of St. Paul's contribution here. The revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ had broken down all barriers, and made free to all the infinite riches of the Christian Gospel.

As Christianity spread in the pagan world, it

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

² Rom. vii. 7-25.

³ Rom. viii. 7.

⁴ Rom. xvi. 22. This amanuensis of Paul was probably a slave.

became inevitably influenced by the Græco-Oriental depreciation of matter. The compiler of 1 Timothy has to protest against those who forbid marriage, and command abstinence from meats which God created.¹ The writer of Hebrews, in condemning adultery, finds it necessary to assert that "marriage is honourable to all, and the bed undefiled."² By the time the First Epistle of John was written the view that matter was essentially evil was already influential in the Church, and had led, not only to the denial of a true Incarnation, but to the perilous belief that deeds done in the body could not affect the soul.

We have only to turn from the New Testament to the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts to realize the ascetic ideal of much popular Christian piety. Since matter was held to be evil, a few, like the false teachers whom 1 John attacks, might regard the acts of the body as unimportant, but the many, though they might themselves marry, yet held that the virgin life was alone the truly Christian. The Gentile Church retained the Christian impulse to seek and to save the lost, and to bring men of every type into the unity of the Church, but its doctrine of man was strongly influenced by Græco-Oriental dualism. We see this even in the greatest of Greek theologians, Athanasius, to whom is assigned the ascetic *Life of St. Anthony*, and who, in his treatise on *The Incarnation*, adduces as the most signal sign of the power of Christianity the vows which

¹ iv. 3.

² xiii. 4.

children take and keep to preserve their virginity intact.

In the Western Church, Christianity was greatly influenced by Roman legalism and Stoic philosophy. The perfect Christian was he who obeyed, not only the evangelical precepts, but the evangelical counsels, and among these was abstinence from marriage. At baptism, there was the forgiveness of sins, but after baptism salvation had to be earned. For this, as Tertullian taught, not mere obedience was required, but self-abasement and asceticism. Married himself, Tertullian spoke with aversion of conjugal life. No birth is perfectly pure. "The chief virtue is that of the virgin, for it is free from affinity to whoredom."¹ Here, too, Augustine's teaching had immense influence. A legal religion is inevitably a religion of uncertainty, for who dare claim that he has *earned* salvation? Augustine won his confidence by trust in the prevenient grace of God. Yet that confidence was available only for the elect, and the number of these was fixed. All others are predestinated to punishment and death. Adam's sin was thus of decisive importance. Because of Adam's sin, all men have an original sin which alone is sufficient to secure their damnation. Augustine's own conflict had been with sensuality. When, in anticipation of marriage, he put away the concubine who had borne him a son, he could not live in chastity. At his conversion he learnt to repress his lusts; at no time could he conceive of pure

wedded love. Linking his teaching here with his terrific interpretation of the Fall, he taught that, as a consequence of Adam's sin, procreation was always due to prurient desire.

Augustine's extreme predestination theory was rejected, but his morbid view of marriage remained. It was part of Luther's greatness that he recognized that Christian perfection lay, not in the asceticism of a legal religion, but in faith and in the obedience to which faith leads. The wife and mother in the home, the man engaged in life's ordinary tasks, could be as truly Christian as any monk or nun. The Reformers thus threw off part of the evil heritage of Augustine. Yet not all was gain. In their quest for certainty, they re-emphasized Augustine's teaching on the irresistible grace of God, and Luther, in violent paradox, and Calvin, with cool consistency, taught again the doctrine of predestination. This doctrine endowed the Reformation leaders with heroic courage, but it is incompatible with the Christian estimate of man. Since, in Calvin's system, God's grace was efficacious only for the elect, it could not fairly be claimed that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Humanity was divided into two sections, the one predestined, through God's inscrutable mercy, to salvation, the other, by His awful decree, to eternal torment.

It is not surprising that Calvinism produced the reaction of Arminianism, or that evangelists like the Wesleys should describe the "horrible

decree" as a blasphemy.¹ Even so late as 1831, McLeod Campbell was deposed from the Scottish Church for daring to preach that Christ died for all. When Darwin's epoch-making book, *The Origin of Species*, was published in 1859, not the least of its offence was the denial of the doctrine of the Fall that his theory of evolution involved. We know now that man has lived on the earth far longer than our forefathers dreamed, and that his physical structure is continuous with that of his animal ancestry. Only through the slow process of evolution did man reach a measure of maturity, and he has instincts which go back to his animal ancestry. Physical science has revealed, not only the immense age, but the immense vastness of the universe. And the new psychology has shown the importance of man's instincts, the danger of their mere repression and the possibility of their sublimation. We have had to recognize the interrelation of body and mind, the influence of the sexual instinct and the place which sex has in the development of a harmonious married life. No longer may we attempt, in Titius' words, "to be wiser than the nature which God has

¹ Cp. Charles Wesley's lines :

" O horrible decree,
Worthy of whence it came.
Forgive their hellish blasphemy
Who charge it on the Lamb.
To limit Thee they dare
BlaspHEME Thee to Thy face,
Deny their fellow worms a share
In Thy redeeming grace."

made,"¹ nor speak as if a God-given instinct were in its rightful use impure.

Though Natural Science can teach us of the framework of the world in which we live, and Psychology can help us better to understand the activities of the mind and its connexion with the body, yet Christian preaching and so Christian theology have still their specific contribution to make. The Christian message includes an estimate of man and of his need which is the correlate of its proclamation of God revealed in Christ and experienced through the Spirit.

Without that revelation it would be easy to be intimidated by the vastness of the universe and to hold man in small esteem, whilst the modern emphasis on the importance of the instincts can lead to the view that man is only a superior animal, whose aspirations for the eternal are mere delusion. An age of mechanism tends to think of man as a machine. And the Great War shattered the dream of inevitable progress, and has led many to despair of the future of the race. The belief in evolution has made obsolete the old formulation of Adam's fall, but it has not removed the fact of corporate evil. The past gives to the present its suspicions and its estrangements. The growing control of the resources of nature has not brought to our race the power of self-control. Instead, it has increased the range and evil consequences of strife. Flippancy comes easily to many in our age, but such flippancy

¹ *Natur und Gott*, p. 829.

is often the expression, not of inner peace, but of concealed despair. Eagerness to enjoy the present is often due to fear as to what the future holds.

To a world disillusioned about the inevitability of progress and conscious of the immense perils and difficulties of our modern life, the Christian preacher may proclaim with fresh power the Christian estimate of man which is the correlate of the revelation of God in Christ. Our conception of the universe has changed much since the New Testament was written, yet the notes of the world's life remain the same and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the vainglory of life—selfishness, ostentation, the reliance on the material—these still dominate the society in which we live. Because these things are not of the Father, the society over which they rule “passes away,” for it lacks stability and meaning. “All that is not of faith is sin.” Patriotism, nationalism, even human love, lack permanence, and turn to evil when they are unrelated to faith in God. As we have seen, our Lord's teaching reflects a grave sense of human need. The Gospel story illustrates to the full the sinfulness of sin, the reaction of evil against good. Yet from that story there comes a message of imperishable hope. Men were “lost,” but the Son of Man came “to seek and to save the lost,” and the God whom He proclaimed was one who seeks the lost until He find it.

In an age of mass-production it is easy to acquiesce

in Nietzsche's estimate of man. "Men are blurred copies on bad paper of worn-out plates." But that is not the Christian estimate. In every man Christ saw one who might become a son of God. Of man's origin, Christianity has little to say. It is not Adam but Christ who is the centre of the Christian message. The Christian estimate of man speaks neither of his natural nobility nor of his total depravity. What it does assert is that man can be redeemed. Man is so made in God's image that in the human life of Christ God's character could be revealed. That is the proof of man's high capability. Yet when Jesus came, men crucified Him. That is the most damning indictment of man's sin. All alike can be saved by Christ and can live in the Spirit. That is the Christian estimate of man. It is an estimate which faces the hard facts of life, and yet knows of a power which can save from sin, and enable men, while living in the conditions of our earthly life, to be already God's children, sharing in the powers of the heavenly life, "in Christ Jesus," "in the Spirit." And it is to this salvation through Christ, and the life in the Spirit, that we have now to turn.

B. THE WORK AND PERSON OF CHRIST

We have seen that the distinctively Christian conception of God is this : that God is revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the Spirit. Christianity is thus unique among the religions

of the world in that its historic founder is inseparably connected with faith in God. He is Himself the object of faith, and yet faith in Him is in no wise an infringement on faith in God. Instead, it is through faith in Him that we believe in God and receive that deliverance from evil and possession of good which Christian teachers have commonly described as salvation. And so Christianity presents to its adherents a problem which no other historic religion is called upon to solve: the problem of the work and person of its founder. Yet, when we turn to the classic documents of Christianity, the writings of the New Testament, we are not confronted with a problem. We are introduced, instead, to a vivid experience of deliverance from evil, and of restoration to communion with God, which, according to the confession of their writers, owes its origin to Jesus Christ.

The writers of the New Testament differ much in their temperament and sense of need. Yet they are united in their confidence that in Jesus Christ they have One who is adequate to their own and others' needs, and, although they express His significance in various ways, they agree in their faith in Him, which is indistinguishable from their faith in God. They give to Him the highest titles which they know, and they do so because only thus can they express their indebtedness to One whom they feel to be their own and all men's Saviour.

As we have seen, when Christianity became

naturalized in the pagan world, the influence of Græco-Oriental thought led to a different conception of man's need, and so to a different conception of salvation. Once again, men gave to Christ the highest name they knew, but this highest name was now derived from Greek philosophy, and expressed a conception of salvation differing much from that of the writers of the New Testament who were Jews. The definitions thus obtained have in their intention been confirmed by later Christian thought, but different conceptions of salvation have led to fresh interpretations of Christ's significance. Wherever men have sought to think for themselves, and not merely to accept the conclusions of tradition, their interpretation of the Saviour has been influenced by their experience of His salvation. Because of this, we do not wisely isolate the doctrine of Christ's person from the doctrine of His work. We learn who He is by what we know Him to have done for men.

It is natural to begin with the presentation of our Lord's work and person given in the first three Gospels, and with the classic interpretations of Him in the rest of the New Testament. The New Testament has an importance which far exceeds all later Christian thought. To it men must return in every age if they would learn of Christ anew. But although our concern is not with the past but with the present, we cannot ignore the later developments of Christian thought. The traditional formulations of the Church have still much influence,

whilst we require all the help that we can gain both from their success and from their failure. We need to learn the lessons of the past to guide us in our own approach to the doctrines of Christ's work and person.

(i) THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

As we turn to the first three Gospels, we find in them no formal statement of our Lord's work and person. These Gospels were written that men might know of the earthly life of the One whom Christians already trusted as their living Lord. Taken in isolation, the Gospels are unintelligible. They are to be studied as part of the witness to Christ of the early Church.

We do not use the Gospels aright if, with the older orthodoxy, we confine their witness to our Lord's work to the few passages in which He spoke of the connexion of His death with men's forgiveness, and their witness to His person to the terms which express His so-called "claims." From the very beginning of His ministry He mediated to men God's salvation, and the significance of His person is to be seen less in His use of the phrase "the Son of Man," or in His acceptance of the title of "Christ," "Messiah," than in the identification of Himself with the message He proclaimed. Nor, with many modern writers, can we speak as if the Gospels have, as their prime concern, the presentation of His teaching. The distinctiveness of His

mission did not lie in a new interpretation of religion, nor in the promulgation of a more exacting, because more inward, ethical ideal. He did more than speak of God's love ; He so lived that it became credible to men. He did not so much make new demands as bring men into a relationship with God of which His new ideal was the inevitable expression.

The oldest of our Gospels thus sums up the message of our Lord : " After that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe in the gospel."¹ His mission, that is, was preceded by John the Baptist's demand for ethical reality ; it was Good News of God that Jesus preached : Good News connected with the advent of the Kingdom, Good News, which, if men were to receive it, required from them a change of mind and faith. St. Luke tells us that in His first address at His home village, our Lord expressed the significance of His vocation in the terms used by the Prophet of the Exile about the Servant of Jehovah. This Scripture had in Him its fulfilment, for God had anointed Him to " preach good tidings to the poor," " to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."² And the same writer tells us that Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had anointed

¹ Mark i. 14 f.

² Luke iv. 18 f.

“with the Holy Ghost and with power,” “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”¹ Thus He seemed to Himself and to His disciples not so much Rabbi or teacher as the Man in whom God’s power and grace were manifested.

The “work of Christ” has come to mean in later theology, the obtaining of men’s forgiveness, and the cancellation of their guilt. This interpretation is far too narrow to express the meaning of His life. He was men’s Saviour from many kinds of ill. He healed the sick and comforted the sad. He enabled men to face with fresh courage the troubles of their lot. Naturally, it was His healing work which most attracted men’s attention, for diseases of the body are more obvious than the evils of the spirit. Many diseases were believed at that time to be due to the possession of the demons, and of these especially He was the healer. In His expulsion of demons, He saw not only the power of God, but the breaking through of the resources of the Kingdom. Living Himself in poverty, and the child of a poor peasant home, He understood, though He condemned, the anxiety men feel about their daily bread, and spoke to the anxious of the loving care of the Father who can meet His children’s needs. He adapted His message to men’s individual circumstances. To His disciples on the eve of His death He spoke of their need to be ready to bear the Cross, if they

¹ Acts x. 38.

would follow Him in that time of peril.¹ But to the larger circle of His hearers He spoke, instead, of the Father who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies in their beauty, and bade them, in simple trust, face each day's trouble as it comes.² Yet His message was as stern as it was gracious. He had come to call sinners to repentance, and only in irony did He speak as if there were any righteous who needed no repentance. Men needed to "enter into life," and to do this might be as hard as the cutting off of a limb or the plucking out of an eye.³ Exigent as were His demands, it was "Good News" that He proclaimed. For men to take His yoke and learn of Him was to find "rest unto their souls."

In the Galilee of our Lord's time there were many who looked with eager hope for the coming of God's Kingdom, and our Lord used that phrase as a summary expression of God's gracious purposes for men. Nowhere does He give a definition of the Kingdom. God's benefits could be known only as they were experienced, and our Lord sought through many a parable and apothegm to lead men to an experience of the Kingdom's power and meaning. This was that supreme good for which if necessary all lesser goods had to be sacrificed. He bade His disciples pray, "Thy Kingdom come,"

¹ Mark viii. 34. Luke by adding "daily" generalizes the command. But it is clear from Mark's version that our Lord's words primarily have to do with a special situation—the perilous venture of His going up to Jerusalem. For a full discussion see Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible*, p. 235.

² Matt. vi. 25-34.

³ Matt. xviii. 8 f.

before they prayed even for their next day's food. No longer need they fear, since it was their Father's good pleasure to give His little flock the Kingdom.

Of the recent discussion as to the meaning of the Kingdom of God on our Lord's lips, we can here speak but briefly. It is not possible for us to-day to understand that Kingdom as if it were primarily the highest human good, the sphere in which God was trusted as Father and obeyed as King. The Kingdom was not so much man's achievement as God's gift. "The Kingdom means not that we believe in God, but that God manifests Himself to us; not that we call upon God with a childlike heart, but that He recognizes us as His children, and honours us with the name of sons."¹ Yet it seems as impossible to interpret the Kingdom as a purely future thing. Many parables and sayings can most naturally be interpreted as referring to the Kingdom's growth,² and it seems perverse to say that the Kingdom is incapable of development; it is purely supernatural, and will be manifested on earth by God's sole and catastrophic act.³ Our Lord expressed His message in the categories of Jewish Apocalypse. Yet He was not an Apocalyptic brooding gloomily on the imminence of God's judgement. His message was Good News.

¹ Titius, *Jesus Lehre vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 104.

² Cp. the Parables of the Sower, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven.

³ Cp. the first edition of J. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, 1892, pp. 18 ff. Weiss himself came to realize the one-sidedness of this presentation. Schweitzer maintains it.

Those who received it were already experiencing what the prophets of the past had longed in vain to see.¹ There was no need to look for portentous signs of the Kingdom's coming. Already it was within men's midst, for He was there.² The question "Was the Kingdom in our Lord's thought present or future?" is, indeed, a false one. The full manifestation of the Kingdom lay in the future, and yet "that future salvation had become present without ceasing to be future."³ His works of healing showed the inception into this world-order of the powers of the future Kingdom.⁴ Already men might gain confidence of the Father's love, courage and inner peace.

At first, many seemed to heed His words. Soon it became clear that His work must end in what the world calls failure. Leaving the village where He had worked, He went with the twelve into loneliness. At last, at Cæsarea Philippi, Peter confessed Him to be the Christ. At once He began to speak of the sufferings and death which by now He knew would end His earthly life. After He had been crucified, those that believed in Him learnt to connect His death with the message of salvation which they now proclaimed. That was a connexion very hard for Jews to see. Jewish expectations of the Messiah conceived of one who would come in

¹ Luke x. 23f.

² Luke xvii. 21. J. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 20, has to describe this as a "bluffing" answer.

³ Julius Kaftan, *Jesus und Paulus*, p. 24.

⁴ Matt. xii. 28,

glory. Even Peter, who had lived with Jesus for the time of His public ministry, could not tolerate the suggestion that the Man he had confessed to be the Christ should end His life by a violent death. How then did our Lord Himself think of His death? That is a question which it is not easy to answer, for the evidence of the Gospels is slight. It cannot be answered merely by reference to those passages which have become the common "proof-texts" for the doctrine of the Atonement. We have rather to consider our Lord's relation to the Kingdom.

With perverse ingenuity it has been argued that Jesus at no time thought Himself to be the Messiah.¹ This conclusion would not only make it impossible for us to regard the Synoptic Gospels as trustworthy historic sources; it would make unintelligible the later preaching of Jesus as Christ and Lord. Yet this view is a reminder of the great reserve with which Jesus spoke of His Messiahship. He was the Messiah, but only after His death would His Messiahship be fully manifest. And His Messiahship, as Peter's rebuke of Him at Cæsarea Philippi shows, was not the Messiahship of popular expectation. He received Peter's confession with grave solemnity, and, when challenged by the High Priest at His trial to say if He was the Messiah, He accepted that designation, but did so in such a way as to show His sense of its ambiguity. Yet His whole ministry was Messianic, for the Kingdom which

¹ Cp. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.

He preached was inseparably connected with Himself.¹

The story of His temptations is here of great significance. They would be meaningless had He not already dedicated Himself to the work of God's Kingdom. It was as Messiah that He was tempted—tempted to act in the only way which would win what men call success. The temptations there described seem to have remained with Him. They may well account for the abrupt violence of His rebuke of Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Only at the end of His short ministry did He speak plainly of His death. But its possibility seems to have been with Him from the first.² If He would not take the world's way, the world would seek its revenge. He was the Messiah, but a Messiah who had come, not with the bizarre splendour of Jewish Apocalyptic hope, but in lowliness and humility, living a life which might end in His rejection by the people and His violent death.

It is this paradox of a lowly Messiah which seems to be expressed in the phrase the Gospels frequently assign to Him, "the Son of Man." It may be true, as some Aramaic scholars tell us, that the phrase in itself means only "man," but, if so, in at least some of its instances it denotes not so much "man"

¹ Matt. xxvi. 64 (Thou hast said); Luke xxii. 70 (Ye say that I am). Dr. Peake well paraphrases the meaning of these cryptic phrases. "It is you who employ the term: I should not have used it myself, but I admit that it is correct." *The Messiah and the Son of Man*, p. 12.

² Cp. Mark ii. 20 (Matt. ix. 15; Luke v. 35) with its reference to the bridegroom being taken away.

as "Man," that strange, mysterious "Man" of whom we read in Daniel and in Enoch. Jesus knew Himself to be the Man to whom was given the task of bringing in the Kingdom. Yet with this conception, He seems to have combined another of a quite different kind. He was not only the Messianic "Man" of Daniel's prophecy, He was the Suffering Servant referred to in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah. As we have seen, it was by a reference to the Servant's work that He announced in Nazareth the nature of His mission. When the people would not receive His message, it became clear that what He had faced in His temptation as a possibility would now become an actuality. The vocation He had accepted would be fulfilled through suffering and death. The Jews who had killed the prophets would also kill the Son.¹

The extreme eschatologists would have us believe that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to die because He hoped thus to compel God to inaugurate the Kingdom.² That interpretation seems impossible. If we accept it, then we have to admit that Jesus did not really master His temptations. What difference would there be between thus seeking "to force God's hand" and the temptation symbolized by throwing Himself from a temple-pinnacle? No, He went up to Jerusalem to face death, not that He might coerce God, but that He might do God's

¹ Matt. xxi. 39.

² Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 385 ff.

will. There was a necessity for Him so to act.¹ He had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah liiii., by His death He would profit "many."² And at the Last Supper with His disciples, He connected His death with the formation of a new covenant between God and man: His blood would be out-poured for "the many."

The Gospels end, not with the story of the Cross, but with the Easter message of the risen Lord. Without the belief in the Resurrection, they would not have been written, and the memory of Jesus would have faded from men's minds. In spite of the common material they contain, each Gospel presents a picture of the Master which is distinctive and individual. Their writers were not concerned with many of the questions to which we modern men would like to have an answer. Recent research has brought much-needed knowledge of the world in which Jesus lived and the movements of the Judaism around Him, though scholars know full well how little as yet they have accomplished, and how much still remains obscure. Yet even if they had been able perfectly to complete their task, the best that they could do would be to put us back, as it were, into the Galilee of our Lord's time, and to enable us, by imagination and by knowledge, to join with the crowds which, at one time gathered eagerly to hear Him speak, or even, it may be, to

¹ Mark viii. 31.

Cp. Mark x. 45 and Isa. liii. 11.

be among that little group of disciples to whom He gave His deeper teaching. The question, who He was, would not be solved. In His own lifetime, men were bitterly divided in their views about Him. We should still have to decide which of those views we would adopt. Some hated Him as an enemy of the nation's hopes ; others thought of Him as a good man, but deceived. And there were those who believed in Him, though they knew not who He was. He brought to them the certainty of God, and so lived that later they could proclaim Him as the world's one Saviour. The terms He used of Himself tell us little of Him. These terms, when used by Him, gained a new and deeper meaning. He was the Christ, the Son of Man, but a Christ different from Jewish expectation, and a Son of Man quite unlike the Son of Man of Apocalyptic phantasy. Yet short as are these Gospels, and fragmentary as is their witness, they still suffice to enable men to be with Jesus and to learn of Him. He spoke of God and God's Kingdom, and so spoke as to show that He Himself was inseparable from the message which He lived and preached. Products of faith, the Gospels have still creative power. We, too, may gain from the Man of whom they speak the certainty of God's forgiving grace and care. He takes in the believer's life a place no other has, so that the question who He is is one which we cannot ignore. That question received its first and classic answer in that experience of His place and work which the rest of the New Testament records.

Of the first preaching of Jesus as the risen Lord we have only the brief witness of the early chapters of Acts. Scholars differ much in their estimate of the writer's knowledge of that first proclamation of the Christian Gospel. The speeches assigned to St. Peter show no sign of having been influenced by the rich development of Christian thought we find in St. Paul, and it would appear that, whatever be the date of Acts, its author is here basing his account on an ancient and trustworthy document.¹ St. Peter is depicted as proclaiming Jesus as "both Lord and Christ."² "In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, wherein we must be saved."³ In the vivid experience of Pentecost, these first believers felt the power of the Spirit whom Jesus had promised. It was no time for calm consideration. The New Age had dawned, and eagerly they waited for the return of Christ, and its full consummation. Unformulated as was their faith, it centred in Christ, and in the certainty of salvation which had come through Him. The common faith of the Christian Church was this: Christ had died for our sins, and risen again.⁴

It is here that we have the prime fact of New Testament Christianity. The Man with whom

¹ Thus J. Weiss, who, unlike many modern scholars, assigns the date of Acts to the late nineties, yet admits that its author is here using ancient and written traditions, *Urchristentum*, p. 7.

² Acts ii. 36.

³ Acts iv. 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 3 f.

the first preachers of the Gospel had lived was proclaimed as the risen Lord, the one Saviour of the world. It is a fact which seems without parallel in the history of religion, and it is not surprising that those who refuse to accept its unique importance should seek to explain away its significance.

It was once fashionable to explain the transformation of the "Messiah-faith" into the "Christ-cult" by the influence of St. Paul. That explanation is to-day impossible. It is recognized that, although St. Paul developed, he did not originate the belief in Jesus as the Lord of men. Judaism provides no explanation of this transformation.¹ The attempt is now made to explain that transformation by the influence of the pagan mystery-cults with their supposed belief in a Lord (*Kurios*), who died for men and rose again. Since this transformation clearly took place before St. Paul's conversion, we are now bidden to assign it to the influence of those who at Antioch entered Christianity from paganism. Such a theory has considerable dialectical advantages over the attempt to explain the perversion of Christianity by the influence of St. Paul. St. Paul's Christianity we know; of the Christianity of the pagan converts at Antioch we know nothing. The evidence for the presence of these mystery-cults in the world where Christianity was first preached

¹ Wrede did, indeed, attempt to show that the Jews had a "Christ-dogmatic," which Paul at his conversion transferred to Jesus (*Paul*, E.T., pp. 151-3), but the Jewish Apocalyptic literature is too well known for this theory to be any longer credited.

is very meagre; some scholars would say non-existent. These cults gathered around mythic figures, who cannot fairly be described as gods who "died and rose again."¹ Even if it could be proved that such cults existed in the time and place of the first Christian preaching, they would not explain the early Christian attitude to Jesus. Christ was worshipped, but He was not worshipped as a "cult-god." The background of the cults was that of paganism. The background of Apostolic Christianity was that of Jewish monotheism. Christ was not worshipped as a separate god, who had somehow to be related to the vague supreme deity of pagan thought. In Christ, God was known. Those that called "upon the Lord" did not do so as to a separate deity. Their faith in Christ was one with their faith in God. Nor was it in the pagan world alone that Jesus was called Lord. Even apart from the witness of Acts that St. Peter so described Him on the day of Pentecost, we have clear proof that Palestinian Christians called Him Lord in the Aramaic phrase *Maranatha*, which became the common watchword of the early Church.²

¹ For these myths see the writer's *The Gospel of St. Paul*, Detached Note B, *The Myths of the Redeemer-Gods*, pp. 266-72, and for a criticism of the attempt to derive Christianity from these cults see pp. 32 f., 53 ff., 67-73.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 22. The phrase means either "Our Lord is coming" (cp. Phil. iv. 5), or "May our Lord come" (cp. Rev. xxii. 20). The phrase, as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, x. 5, shows, was used at the Communion Service. It is interesting to notice the embarrassment this phrase caused to Bousset, the chief exponent of the religio-historical theory. In the first edition of his *Kyrios Christos*, 1913, p. 103, he

It was not through the influence of pagan cults that the first Christians called Jesus "Lord." It was because they needed the highest term they knew to express their sense of what He was, and what they owed to Him. It was not merely the resurrection of a man which they proclaimed. It was the resurrection of that Man with whom some of them had lived that formed the first Christian message. They could not so have preached unless all they had known of Him was congruous with this claim. The resurrection did not originate their faith in Him; it turned their partial faith into full certainty.

The significance of St. Paul's interpretation of the work and person of his Lord was thus not that of innovation but of development. In one respect alone, he differed from the Judaizers who opposed his teaching. They, too, called Jesus "Lord," and confessed His saving power. But they did not discern that Christianity differed from Judaism not only by its faith in Jesus as the Christ and risen Lord but in its conception of God's character and rule. For St. Paul, faith in the crucified and risen Lord meant a complete transformation of his thought of God. Since the Messiah had died upon

admitted that the phrase corresponded to the "Come, Lord Jesus" of Rev. xxii. 20, but suggested that it came from Jewish Christians at Antioch, who turned into Aramaic the Greek *Kyrios* (Lord). In his *Jesus der Herr*, 1916, p. 22 f., he interpreted the phrase as a curse which had nothing to do with the Jesus-cult, but meant "Our Lord (*i.e.* God) will come and judge you." In the second edition of his *Kyrios Christos*, 1921, p. 84, he returns to his first suggestion.

the Cross, the authority of the Law was abrogated ; God's relationship to men could no longer be conceived in a legal way.

As we have seen, St. Paul, like many others of his age, conceived of the antagonists of man, not abstractly, but as if they were almost personal. Among their antagonists, he seems to have reckoned Law. In itself good, and emanating from God, it yet was hostile to men, as He was not. It was one of the tyrants which oppressed this evil age, seeking to hold men still in bondage, although its authority had now been taken away. In his passionate invective against the Judaizers who sought to bring his converts from paganism into subjection to the Law, St. Paul could even compare the Law to the demonic powers of paganism who afflict this present age.¹ For him the ordinances of the Law had been cancelled on the Cross where Christ triumphed over the spiritual enemies of man, and there delivered those who believe in Him from that evil age to which both Judaism and paganism belonged.²

Law is thus related in St. Paul's thought, not to reconciliation, but to redemption. Through Christ, Christians have passed into a sphere over which Law has no longer authority.

It is from this point of view that we can rightly understand those two passages which have been and

¹ This seems to be the meaning of Gal. iv. 3, 9, where " the elements of the world " apparently denote elemental and astral spirits. Cp. *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 135 f.

² Col. ii. 14 f. and 8.

still are used as the classic texts for the penal theory of the Atonement: Gal. iii. 13 f. and Rom. iii. 21-31.

The first passage occurs in the Epistle in which St. Paul vehemently opposes the contention of the Judaizers that Gentile converts also must observe the Jewish Law. The Law brought with it its curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." As no man can fulfil all the Law's demands, all who are under the Law are under this curse. But Christ has removed this curse from us, "having become a curse for us," for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." The passage has been interpreted to mean that Christ endured the actual curse of God. If that were his meaning, then, as we have seen, we could not claim that St. Paul had, indeed, discovered God in Christ¹ for we should then have to suppose that in the very Epistle in which he denounces legalism he yet asserts that penal justice remained the final principle of God's rule, so that, only when its claims had been met, could His grace be active. This interpretation is only possible by a complete misunderstanding of Paul's thought. Whatever else the curse of the Law means, it cannot mean the curse of God, for to Paul the Law was not the final expression of God's rule. It had become a tyrant, one of the tyrants that oppress this evil age, and from which Christians are redeemed. We have not here the formal language of theology, but a passion-

¹ See earlier, p. 70.

ate repudiation of the position of the Judaizers. If the Law had any claim over us, those claims had been met, for Christ's death had met all its demands. The curse of the Law is not the curse of God, but a curse connected with that legal interpretation of God's dealing with the world which, now that Christ has come, we know to be inadequate. If our relationship with God were that of legalism, then we should be still condemned. But God's dealing with the race is not one of legal recompense. Through the death of Christ we are freed from the tyranny of legalism, and know God as He is.

We have a similar teaching in the other great passage, Rom. iii. 21-31, which is commonly quoted in support of the penal theory of the atonement.

God had been patient with men's sin, but His patience was not due to indifference. It is to be explained by His intention so to deal with it in the death of Christ as to show Himself at once "the just and the justifier." The word translated in our versions as "propitiation" is probably an adjective, not a noun ("whom God set forth as propitiatory"). Jews and pagans alike had thought that they must win God's favour by sacrifices. Such sacrifices were a recognition of man's estrangement from God, and an attempt to remove the estrangement. St. Paul proclaims what to men of his age would have seemed a strange novelty. In the new way of righteousness, it is God that reconciles. He it is who

in Christ seeks to remove the estrangement which separates men from Himself. Thus He reveals Himself as "just" and the "justifier." It is not that He is "just," and, in spite of this, the "justifier." Instead, His "righteousness" shows itself in "counting just or righteous." St. Paul uses the juridical language of his own upbringing, and of his Judaizing opponents, but his meaning is not juridical. God, as he puts it, justifies "by grace," but that is what a judge cannot do; whilst "to justify the ungodly," that is, "to acquit the guilty," is the contradiction of a legal judgement. To men of our age the terms he uses are strange and perplexing. They express in juridical language, not juridical conceptions, but God's free grace.¹ That God had to be reconciled was a commonplace of religious thought. What would have surprised his hearers was St. Paul's declaration that God had taken the first step in reconciliation. As he elsewhere puts it, God was in Christ, not that He might be reconciled, but reconciling the world unto Himself, "not reckoning unto them their trespasses."² It is the Father's free forgiveness of which He speaks, but a forgiveness to be received with awe and wonder, for it has become effective for us through the Cross of Christ.

That was St. Paul's distinctive contribution to the understanding of the work of Christ. The legal

¹ For a fuller discussion of these passages see *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 100-109, and 152-5.

² 2 Cor. v. 19.

terms he uses have obscured for many his radical breach with legalism. And for him Christ's death upon the Cross meant, not only deliverance from the legalistic conception of God's rule, but deliverance from all the tyrannies which oppress the soul of man.

We have seen how sombrely St. Paul conceived the state of those who, as unredeemed by Christ, still belonged to this present Age.¹ But for those thus redeemed, every tyranny was vanquished. Sin reigned in the flesh, but from Sin he had now deliverance.² Still he felt within him the impulses of his lower nature. He had to buffet his body lest he should be himself a castaway.³ Yet Sin's dominion over the flesh was broken. Christ had come in the flesh and yet been without sin.⁴ Christ's character had reproductive power, and in his conflict with the impulses of the flesh, St. Paul had now the reinforcement of the Spirit. Christians needed no longer to live according to the flesh to do its works. They could live in the Spirit and bring forth the Spirit's "fruits."⁵ His converts may not have understood his dialectic, but many of them did discover the redemptive power of the Gospel which he preached. Some of them had been addicted to the worst sexual perversions of paganism. Yet of them he could write, "Ye were washed, ye were sanctified, ye were justified

¹ See earlier, pp. 102 f.

² Rom. vii. 7-25.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

⁴ Rom. viii. 3 and 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁵ Gal. v. 16-24.

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”¹ Christians were called to die to sin through Christ’s death, and rise to a newness of life like that of His resurrection.²

There is another element in St. Paul’s experience of Christ’s work which is often passed over by us in the West. It was a demon-haunted world in which he lived, and, to many of his converts, no part of his message would have seemed so true a Gospel as his proclamation that “The rulers of this age are defeated”; “The Lord is faithful who shall guard from the evil one.” Christians were translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love.³ We interpret differently the evils which oppress us, and speak not of demonic powers, but of environment and the “spirit of our age,” or of “complexes” and “neuroses.” What is significant is not St. Paul’s interpretation of life’s evils, for that interpretation was merely that of his age. It is his experience and conviction that Christ can deliver from every tyranny of the soul. In all these things we may be “more than conquerors.” We, too, may know that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But in Christ St. Paul found not only deliverance from every kind of spiritual bondage, but an entry into a new world of experience and of thought. Through Him, he knew himself now to be God’s

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 10 f.

² Rom. vi. 1-11.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 6; 2 Thees. iii. 3; Col. i. 13.

son, and to have in part possession of the Spirit's power. This positive content of salvation found most pointed expression in the phrase which apparently he coined. He was in Christ Jesus. In Christ were all his activities, his energy, his joy. We have seen that in the teaching of our Lord, the Kingdom was at once present and future. It was a future good which had become present without ceasing to be future.¹ St. Paul employs the Jewish ideas of the "two ages" to express a similar idea. This "Age" was ruled over by many an evil power, from whose tyranny Christ had set him free. But the New Age had dawned. For Paul its corruption was connected with Christ's resurrection. Already he could live in the eternal as in his home, for the content of the eternal was given him in Christ. Once again the form of his thought comes from a Judaism which has lost for us its meaning. But its substance is an essential element of the Christian Gospel. In time we can live for the eternal. We live in a world of time and space, where often it is hard to see the victory of good. We, too, can remember that the things which are seen are transitory, the things which are unseen are eternal.² The final secret of the eternal sphere is given us in the Christ who died and rose again. So, in part, we may be delivered from bondage, not to sin alone, but to the temporal. Christ has risen. In Him is our life, a life which death will not interrupt, but consummate.

See earlier, p. 119.

2 Cor. iv. 18.

Such in brief is St. Paul's interpretation of the meaning of Christ's work. It is a meaning which is summed up for him in the death and resurrection of the Lord. It is clear that St. Paul gives to Christ a place no man, who is man alone, has the right to take. And yet his faith in Christ did not conflict with his faith in God. Instead, it was through Christ that he gained his glad confidence in God's grace.

St. Paul's estimate of Christ has an importance greater far than his descriptions of His person which have become the proof texts of later Christology. These descriptions are not the definitions of a theologian. They are the attempts of the greatest of all missionaries to confirm the faith of his converts by reminding them of the complete adequacy of Christ their Saviour and their Lord.

At the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul relates the coming of Christ to Jewish prophecy. The Gospel of God's Son which he had to preach had been foretold by the prophets of Judaism. Jesus "according to the flesh" was of "the seed of David," and thus fulfilled one of the Jewish expectations of the Messiah. His spirit was a "holy spirit," and by the resurrection from the dead, by virtue of His holy spirit, He was "defined" as Son of God.¹ The word we have translated "defined" has been much discussed. Whatever be the meaning of the passage, it does not teach, as some have supposed, an "Adoptionist Christology," for elsewhere in

this Epistle the pre-existence of Christ is clearly taught.¹

The belief in Christ's pre-existence finds its most famous expression in Phil. ii. 5-11. It is the passage on which has been based the modern "Kenotic" theory, which explains the incarnation by the "self-emptying" of the Son of God, His depotentiation into the limits of a human life. In consequence, the passage has been expounded with elaborate care both by the defenders and the antagonists of that theory.² But this passage was not written to explain the mode of Christ's incarnation. It was written that, by the appeal to the fact of the incarnation, Paul's converts might learn to show the humility which had marked the mind of Christ. He who was by nature divine, instead of grasping at His Godhead, had so emptied Himself as to appear on earth in the form of a servant, and had become obedient even to the death of the Cross. And by His self-abnegation He had become the actual Lord of men, and this "unto the glory of the Father."

In the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul passes to the cosmic significance of Christ. At first sight, his bold statements seem to soar far above the necessities of Christian thought. Yet even here his purpose is not speculative but practical. In an earlier

Rom. viii. 3 and 32.

¹ For the "kenotic" interpretation of the passage see Bensch, *Die Lehre von der Kenose*, pp. 174-229; for the anti-kenotic view, Gifford, *The Incarnation: A Study of Philippians*, ii. 5-11.

Epistle he had declared that all things are through the one Lord Jesus Christ, and we through Him, and had thus asserted the absoluteness of Christian faith. His converts had been troubled about food offered to idols. Paul reassures them. Paganism had its many gods and lords. For Christianity there was but one God, who is the sole source of existence and its goal. There was but one Lord, God's sole agent in creation and in providence.¹

At Colossae some of St. Paul's converts were tempted to give an undue place to intermediary beings. This worship of angels seemed to St. Paul a menace to their Christian faith. Why trouble about such intermediary beings? All things seen and unseen, including every kind of celestial power, were created by Christ and for Him. Christ is prior to them all, and everything coheres in Him. In this way, he could remove his converts' fears and assert the sole supremacy of Christ. But St. Paul hastens on to speak of the relation of Christ to those that trust in Him. "He is the head of the Body, that is, the Church." "It was in him that the divine Fulness willed to settle without limit, and by him it willed to reconcile in his own person all on earth and in heaven alike, in a peace made by the blood of his cross."² Once more, St. Paul is not writing in the interests of a speculative theologian. He is writing as a missionary seeking to combat anything which would imperil his converts' faith in their one Lord.

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

² Col. i. 14-20 (Moffatt's translation).

Christ thus had so great a place in the teaching and experience of St. Paul that it is natural for us to ask, How did he relate his faith in Christ to his faith in God? That is a question which seems quite alien from his thought. It is doubtful if he ever calls Christ God,¹ and yet often he so interchanges the words "Lord" and "God" as to show their inextricable connexion in his thought. His faith in Christ was part of his faith in God, and in confessing Christ, he was confessing God. Faith in Christ was not an extra to his faith in God. It was in the face of Christ that God's glory had been shown, a glory, not, as he had once believed, of vindictive justice, but the glory of holy love, the holy love which Christ had shown in life and death.

St. Paul's interpretation of the work and person of our Lord bears the clear impress of his receptive brain and fervent heart. But, apart from his sharp antithesis between law and grace, he spoke not for himself alone, but for the other leaders of this early Church. The later writers of the New Testament use different terms to express their indebtedness to Christ, but they are united in their sense of His perfect adequacy as Saviour, and His unique significance.

We may take as illustration, first, two books which, though possibly written about the same time, differ much in temper and in outlook: the beautiful

¹ Unless it be in Rom. ix. 5. If the Epistle to Titus can be regarded as Paul's, there is a parallel reference in ii. 13, but here too the translation is doubtful.

epistle known as the First Epistle of Peter and the Book of Revelation. The writer of 1 Peter is addressing those for whom loyalty to Christ meant persecution. They had not seen Christ, and yet they loved Him; believing in Him, though they saw Him not, they could rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.¹ They had to suffer unjustly, but so had Christ. He did no sin, neither was any guile in His mouth; being reviled, He reviled not. "He bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness."² He "suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."³ No less impressive is the witness of the Book of Revelation. None but pedants would expect to find formal statements of theology in that courageous battle-song of a Church threatened with extermination. Its writer's thought of God was not entirely purged from the fierceness of Jewish Apocalypse, but of the glory of Christ he is certain. Over this world Cæsar seemed to rule, but in the unseen world there reigned the Lamb that was slain. Christ was the centre of the Church's life, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The throne of God was also the throne of the Lamb.

Of special interest is the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. As St. Paul used the categories of legalism to present an interpretation of Christianity free from all legal ideas of God, so this writer uses sacrificial and priestly terms to describe a Christian-

i. 8.

² ii. 23 f.³ iii. 18.

ity which needed no sacrificial rites nor priest, for Christ, our High Priest, had offered up a sacrifice which made all other sacrifices superfluous. Although the language used is thus that of sacrifice, the meaning of sacrifice is completely changed. What Christ offered was Himself, and His offering was morally spotless.¹ These words have been taken to mean that the supreme value of this sacrifice lay in the superiority of the victim. Priests offered the blood of bulls or goats. He made the more precious offering of His life. Such an interpretation is inadequate to the writer's meaning, and ignores the cardinal words of the passage, "through an eternal spirit." These words transform the whole conception of sacrifice. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, for bulls and goats were but passive victims. The sacrifice Christ offered was one of voluntary self-dedication. He came to do God's will, and by His complete obedience offered once for all the only sacrifice which God desired, perfecting by His offering those that are sanctified.²

He was the perfect High Priest, not only because of the perfection of the offering which He made, but because of His sympathy with men. That sympathy He gained by His own experience of human sorrow. He who came to do God's will learned obedience by the things which He suffered.³ Our High Priest is not one "that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but one that hath been in all points tempted as we are, yet without

¹ ix. 14.² x. 6-14.³ v. 8.

sin.”¹ Because He suffered and was tempted, He “is able to succour them that are tempted.”²

Rich in significance as was the writer’s use of the category of priesthood, it was inadequate to express all that he found in Christ. Christ to him was the great Pioneer, the One who, going before, had opened up for us the way to God, the pattern, as well as the object of our faith.

It has been contended that, since the Epistle speaks of Christ as the first-born of creation, its writer held an Arian view of Christ.³ That seems a misunderstanding. The Arian issue had not yet arisen, and the writer employs quotations from the Old Testament which are capable of an Arian interpretation. But the whole purport of his Epistle is the entire adequacy of the Christian Gospel. He brings in review various personages and functions of Judaism, and shows that Christianity “better” fulfils their meaning. But behind the Apologetic “better” lies the dogmatic “best.” Christianity is the eternal reality of which Judaism was the transient shadow. It is the religion of perfect access to God through Jesus Christ. Much as he emphasizes our Lord’s affinity with men, he assigns to Him a place which no creature could rightly take. The perfection of salvation presupposes the perfection of the Saviour. He who made purification from sins is the effulgence of God’s glory. He is

¹ iv. 15.

² ii. 18.

³ Cp. the chapter on Le Christ in Ménégoz’s *La Théologie de l’Épître aux Hébreux*.

the Son in whom the God who spoke of old through the prophets has declared to men His final word.¹

The New Testament estimate of Christ's work and person reaches its consummation in the First Epistle and the Gospel of St. John. They were written at a time when pagan influences were already active in the Christian Church. For those accustomed to the Græco-Oriental dualism of spirit and matter it was hard to accept the Christian doctrine that One who was Divine had become for our sakes truly man. Since the material was evil, how could the Divine become incarnate? Such a belief might do for simple Christians, but to Gnostics, "illuminated persons," it seemed too crude to be believed. Easier was it to conceive of the heavenly Christ as one of the many æons which bridged the gulf between God and the world. And that heavenly Christ, or Son of God, could not share in human weakness and suffering, for weakness and suffering were unfitting for the Divine. Thus it was taught that the heavenly Christ descended on the human Jesus at the Baptism, but departed from Him before the crucifixion, and so had no share in the shame and agony of the Cross. It is this belief that the Epistle attacks. It was written that those who believed in the Son of God might know that they had eternal life,² and provides an apparatus of tests by which its readers might know if indeed they had

¹ Cp. i. 1-3.

² 1 John v. 13.

eternal life.¹ Such a dualism led some to declare that they did not sin, for sin was of the body, and the man who knew that spirit and body were separate was untouched by his body's deeds. Others, from the same standpoint, could declare that sin was of no importance, for it did not affect the spirit. It is this that accounts for the writer's vehement protest, on the one hand, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," and, on the other hand, that sin is simply "inadmissible" in the man who abides in God.² The victory which has overcome the world is faith in Jesus as the Son of God—the Son of God who came—not with the water only, but with the blood, who was one with Jesus not at the Baptism alone, but at the crucifixion.³ It is in the Son that the Father is manifested. To deny the incarnation is to lose the certainty of God's Fatherhood.⁴ We know what love is through the Father's gift of the Son, and that absolute of love is to be seen likewise in the Son's laying down His life for us.⁵ That to the writer was the essence of the Christian Gospel. It was a Gospel whose truth could be discerned in the righteousness and love of those who share its faith. Already God in His grace has made us His children. When Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.⁶

¹ Cp. the title of Law's suggestive exposition of 1 John, *The Tests of Life*.

² Cp. i. 8 and iii. 6.

³ v. 1-6.

⁴ ii. 23.

⁵ iv. 10 and iii. 16.

⁶ iii. 1 f.

In the Gospel, the writer commends his faith in the Jesus who was the Son of God by retelling the life of Jesus in such a way as to reveal its eternal meaning. It is a book of which we have lost the secret. In it historic record and devotional reflection are so inextricably combined that it is hard to tell what is history, and what the product of later Christian experience. On the one hand, the writer gives a different picture of our Lord's mission from that of the other evangelists. They depict Him as preaching primarily not Himself, but God and God's Kingdom; only late in His short ministry does He receive from Peter the confession of His Messiahship. In St. John, our Lord proclaims Himself as Messiah and Son of God even to hostile hearers. Yet, on the other hand, the writer faithfully records the human weakness of Jesus, His hunger and thirst, His intercourse with the lowly and the despised. Some of the speeches assigned to Jesus may be coloured by later Christian controversy and preaching.¹ But for this writer, as for St. Paul, Jesus was in no sense "another God." All that He did was in dependence on the Father. Faith in Him was faith in God. To see Him is to see the Father. Eternal life is this: to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God had sent.² The Cross which had seemed His shame was now seen to be His glory. Lifted up, He draws men to Him. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

¹ E.g. John viii. 14-58.

² John xvii. 3.

To many modern readers the opening verses of the Gospel are strange and difficult, for, to those unfamiliar with the speculation of that age, the description of Christ as the Word conveys but little. To those of John's age and place, it was a familiar term, and by it he would have been able to win a hearing for his message. What would have sounded strange and new was the declaration that the Word had become flesh, and tabernacled amongst us, so that His glory had been seen on earth, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time"—with that most of John's age would agree. It was the purpose of the Gospel to show how in the only begotten Son God could now be seen.

The conception of Christ as the Word is lacking from the rest of the Gospel, and does not seem to have determined its content. As we shall see, it became later of decisive importance for the interpretation of Christ's person. In itself, it is no explanation of what Christ is. It is rather an attempt to translate His significance into language which the cultivated of that age could understand. Its use in the Prologue is an indication that henceforth the Gospel was to be interpreted in Greek, instead of Jewish, terms.

As we bring to an end this brief description of the New Testament interpretations of the work and person of our Lord, we note their difference and unity. Its writers use the most varied terms to

describe the significance to them of Jesus Christ. They are at one in this, that all alike confess in Him their own and all men's Saviour, and, to describe Him, use the highest terms within their reach, and, since no term seemed adequate, they give to these terms a new and fuller meaning. These writers see in Him one who—to use a modern phrase—has the value to them of God. He is the object of their faith, and yet their faith in Him is not a contradiction of their faith in God; it is rather its one adequate support. And faith in Christ meant not only faith in God, but love to men.

Explain it as we will, the New Testament interpretations of Christ's work and person are unsurpassed in their vividness and insight. Many a modern Christian, finding in the New Testament more adequate expression of his experience than any that later orthodoxy affords, is not unnaturally impatient of the later developments of Christian thought. Instead of troubling about these, why not pass on at once to the attempt to express in the language of to-day those great conceptions of the New Testament which have still creative power? But the history of Christian thought cannot be ignored without heavy loss. Current conceptions of Christ's work and person owe much, both by attraction and repulsion, to the solutions won in past controversies, so that it is impossible for us to understand the present without some reference to the past. Although we are here concerned not with the history of dogma, but with the necessities of the present,

we need to turn for a while to the classic answers of Christian thinkers to the problem of Christ's work and person.

(ii) THE ECCLESIASTICAL DEVELOPMENT

The so-called Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and the Definition of Chalcedon have still decisive influence, and by many are regarded as the final answers to the problem of Christ's person. They can be understood only by reference to the controversies from which they sprang.

The early Apologists, who sought to commend Christianity to the pagan world, reveal little of its deepest meaning. Like St. John, they speak of Christ as the Word, the Logos, but, though they use the term, they mean by it less than did St. John. Christ was not for them one with God. He was another God, inferior to that highest God whom they identified with the vague absolute of pagan speculation. Christianity was for them a new "teaching," and Christ a new "lawgiver." Their interpretation of Christianity seems jejune, but they gained from it enough to win courage, if need be, to die for the Christ whom they inadequately confessed.

It was the Gnostics who brought into prominence the idea of redemption, although their conception of redemption was more pagan than Christian. Their scheme of "Æons," of whom Christ was one, seems to us to-day not only incredible, but very dull. But to many Christians of the time their

paganized interpretation of Christianity was so attractive that for long Christianity was in jeopardy. The Church repelled that attack by an appeal to authority, the authority of the New Testament, and of the bishops as the successors to the Apostles, and also by the formulation of that Rule of Faith¹ which lies behind our so-called Apostles' Creed.

By the beginning of the third century, the Church numbered among its members men who, through their familiarity with the best culture of their age, were able to command the respect of their pagan adversaries. Clement of Alexandria could quote the Greek classics as freely as the Bible, whilst Origen, his successor at the Catechetical School of Alexandria, could meet on equal terms the most highly cultivated of his age. To Origen the Church owed its conception of "the eternal generation of the Son." The Son was begotten from the very substance of the Father. He is "consubstantial" (*homoousios*) with the Father, begotten from His will. Yet Origen, too, retained the conception of the Son as "inferior" to the Father, and, like the earlier Apologists, conceived of Him as a "second God." Thus from Origen could later be derived those two conceptions of Christ connected with the names of Athanasius and of Arius.

Athanasius's interpretation of Christ, and with it the conception of Christ's work and person which became dominant in the Eastern Church, can best

¹ The Rule of Faith in a form resembling that of the Apostles' Creed is to be found, e.g., in Irenæus (c. A.D. 140-200), *Against Heresies*, i, 10.

be studied in his short book *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*, written when he was only a youth, and before the outbreak of the Arian controversy. It was his greatness that he sought to interpret Christ from the point of view, not of speculations on the creation of the world, but of the needs of man's salvation. But salvation he interpreted as did the paganism of his age, primarily as redemption from corruption. The race of men was perishing through the corruption due to sin. That corruption man's repentance alone could not destroy. In one way alone could man be saved, and that was taken by the Word. The Word assumed a human body. This body, "by virtue of the union of the Word with it, was no longer subject to corruption." And as the presence of a great king in a city makes it honoured and secure, so the abode of the Word in a body removed from our race the corruption of death. Athanasius refers to other aspects of our Lord's redeeming work. He speaks of it as the payment of a debt man owed and could not pay, and as a voluntary sacrifice. But his main interest is expressed in the famous words which sum up his argument: "He was made man, that we might be made God, and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father."¹ It is not easy for us to attach a clear meaning to this idea of "deification," the bestowal of immortality. But it is a conception which is determinative of Athanasius's conception of Christ. Christianity was

¹ § 54, 3.

clearly becoming a sacred mystery. For its ordinary adherents, more important than the interpretation of its theologians was the confidence that through Christ victory could be secured from the devil and from demons, and this belief also Athanasius expresses, for he speaks of Christ by His elevation to the Cross, having "cleared the air of the malignity both of the devil and of the demons of all kinds."¹

It was an immense advantage to the Church that it had in Athanasius one who knew that only a Saviour fully divine could be adequate to the world's salvation. For the seeming triumph of Christianity over paganism which this book was written to celebrate was to be followed by long years of strife, due not to paganism, but to the paganized Christianity of Arius, who spoke of Christ as a creature who yet was to be worshipped.

At first the cause of which Athanasius became the leading champion seemed to win an easy victory. The Church now enjoyed imperial patronage, and Constantine convened at Nicæa in A.D. 325 the first of the so-called Œcumenical Councils in order that the controversy might be stayed, and the peace of the Empire restored. Arius's blunt and flippant statements of his views had offended many, and, in the end, the Council adopted a Creed which declared that "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is from the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, very God from very God, be-

¹ § 25.

gotten not made, of one essence (*homoousion*) with the Father" and anathematized those who say "There was, when He was not" or that "before He was begotten, He was not" and that "He was made out of nothing," or who pretend that the Son of God is "of another subsistence (*hypostasis*), or essence (*ousia*)" or that He was "a creature," or "subject to change or conversion."

The word "of one essence" (*homoousion*), proposed by the Emperor, apparently at the suggestion of a Western bishop, was to become the watchword of Athanasian orthodoxy. In the West it had long been customary to speak of the Son as "of one substance" with the Father. In the East the term was repellent to many, and it soon became clear that the victory won by orthodoxy was premature. Then followed long years of bitter strife, and, since uniformity of belief was now enforced by the civil power, first the Arians and then the Athanasians were in turn cruelly persecuted.

When Athanasius died, A.D. 373, the triumph of his cause was near. But already a new controversy had begun to vex and divide the Church. Arius had not only denied Christ's true divinity; by affirming that the Word took "a body without a soul," he had denied His true manhood also. There was less interest in His manhood than in His divinity, and this second denial was for long almost ignored. The controversies which arose on the relation of the divine to the human element in the incarnate person took their form, less from

Arius's denial, than from the opposition of the two great Schools of Alexandria and Antioch.

The controversy on the divinity of Christ had been saved from futility by Athanasius's clear insight that only One truly divine could be adequate for man's salvation. But these later controversies on the nature of Christ's incarnate person lacked any such clear issue. The views of the two Schools represented ancient modes of thought, and each had its advantages and its defects. The School of Alexandria, like Athanasius, its great exponent, saw in Christ the Son of God incarnate; the School of Antioch saw in Him the Man in whom God dwelt. The first view emphasized the divinity of the incarnate Word and the unity of His person, but tended to obscure His true humanity. The second view secured His true humanity, but, by the emphasis on the two natures of Christ, tended to destroy the concrete unity of His person, or to maintain it only by relapsing into a lower view of Christ which saw in Him, not the God-man, but a man whom God had inspired.

This is not the place to narrate the sordid story of the conflicts which resulted from extreme and indiscreet expressions of the views of these opposing Schools.¹ The orthodox answer to the problem was at length provided by the Fourth Œcumenical

¹ For these controversies, see the writer's *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, pp. 104-21. Recent research has shown that neither Apollinarius nor Nestorius held the views traditionally assigned them through the malice of their enemies, whilst Eutyches' teaching approximated to that of Cyril, who is reckoned orthodox.

Council which met at Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The Council issued as the one Creed of the Church the so-called Nicene Creed of present use, and, after long dispute, the Imperial Commissioners secured the passing of the Definition of Christ's incarnate person which declared that "we all teach, with one accord, one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who for us men and our salvation, according to His manhood was born of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer (*theotokos*) one and the same Christ, Son, Lord—only begotten, confessed in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division or separation. The difference of the two natures is in no way denied by reason of their union; on the other hand, the peculiarity is preserved, and both concur in one Person, and one Hypostasis."¹

At Chalcedon, as at Nicæa, the decisive word was given by the West, for the Definition of Chalcedon owed much to the Roman orthodoxy of Leo's Tome. The Definition was enforced by the imperial power, but it brought to the Church, not peace, but two hundred years of bitter strife which led in the end to the loss to Islam of large parts of Eastern Christendom. As Nicæa rejected the mythological idea of Christ as a half-God, so Chalcedon rejected the mythological idea of Christ as a half-man.² Its definition was of use in preventing a premature solution, but it was itself no solution of the problem

E.T. from Kidd, *A History of the Church to A.D. 461*, iii, p. 326.

² Cp. earlier, p. 47.

with which it deals. On the contrary, as Archbishop Temple wrote, its formula "is, in fact, a confession of the bankruptcy of Greek patristic theology."¹ Its decision involved what the Sixth Œcumenical Council of A.D. 680 and 681 explicitly declared, that in the incarnate person of Christ there were two wills, one human, one divine. That dogma² seems to be in clear opposition to the picture of His life provided in the Gospels. And this two-nature doctrine had the additional disadvantage of being incongruous with the conception of salvation, which, apart from the theology of Antioch, was dominant in the East. These bitter conflicts were due in part to the ambiguity of the terms employed.³ But there was a deeper reason for the failure of the Eastern Church to reach a truer conception of the Incarnation. A St. Paul and a St. John sought to know God in the historic Christ, and to interpret the character of the Father by the life and death of the Son. The Greek theologians assumed that they knew what God is, and sought to construe the person of Christ through ideas of God and man not yet Christianized. With pagan speculation they held as axiomatic that God was "impassible" and "apathetic." But if God be incapable of suffering or of feeling, how can the Divine become incarnate? Christ was declared truly God and truly man, but

¹ *Foundations*, p. 230.

² The dogma of dyothelitism. It is defended by Dr. Gore in his *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, pp. 234-42.

³ For the origin and meaning of these terms see C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, pp. 35-52.

neither the nature of God nor the potentiality of man was interpreted through their revelation in His person. It was not an accident that when the Seventh Œcumenical Council met at Nicæa in A.D. 787 it met to legalize the veneration of images. Christ had become too remote from men to meet their needs, and the place He should have filled was taken by the images; veneration of these met the demands of popular piety in a way in which a Christ whose historic life had been forgotten could not do.

In the West, there was from the first a more vivid remembrance of Christ's historic life, and a truer recognition of His manhood. In speculative problems on Christ's nature, the West had little interest. The answers to these problems were clear. The triune God was one "substance" in three "persons"; the incarnate Christ had two natures, one divine, one human. These were the dogmas of the Church which had to be accepted as part of the obedience of every Christian man. And the West, as we have seen, was able to impose its formulas upon the East.

Yet although the West accepted the Christological dogmas expressed in the decisions of the Councils, it gave to the work of Christ a meaning which preserved to the Church the remembrance of His manhood. The Western Church conceived of Christianity in a legal way. It spoke much of "merit" and of supererogatory works, and it interpreted the work of Christ by the value of His

obedience and humility. Thus for Augustine the "Lord Jesus Christ God-man" was "both a manifestation of divine love towards us, and an example of human humility with us." "Here is great misery, proud man. Here is greater mercy, a humble God."¹ It was as man that Christ was mediator.²

From the West there came an interpretation of Christ's work which proved of epoch-making importance, and which still influences popular Christian thought and preaching. In East and West alike, the commonest interpretation of Christ's work had been that of a victory over the devil. By many writers, both of the East and of the West, it had been taught that the "ransom for the many" which Christ laid down His life to give was a ransom paid to the devil. Sometimes this transaction with the devil was depicted as a clever piece of deception so that the devil who had deceived Eve was himself deceived. Thus even the great Augustine, though he taught other and worthier views, could speak of Christ having bought us by holding out His Cross to the devil as a mousetrap on which He had placed His blood as a bait.

The interpretation of Christ's work as a ransom paid to the devil was in part displaced by the interpretation given by Anselm in his book *Why did God become Man?*³

¹ *On Catechising*, iv.

² *Confessions*, x, 43 (*in quantum enim homo, in tantum mediator*).

³ *Cur deus homo?*

By Anselm's time, the ancient requirement of the Church that the penitent must make public confession of his sin had fallen into disuse. It was to the priest that confession was said, and absolution was made conditional on the performance of satisfaction. This satisfaction could be performed by others at the penitent's expense.¹ In this way the custom of the Church had been approximated to the feudal custom of the payment of a *wergild* to compensate for homicide.² To kill a slave could be paid for cheaply. To kill a freeman was expensive, and to kill a noble so expensive that few could pay the necessary sum. To kill a king was to incur a debt too great for any to pay.

It was through such ideas that Anselm made the work of Christ intelligible to his age. Sin is a failure to give to God what is His due. Thus by sin God is dishonoured, and the sinner must pay back that which he has taken from God's honour. Without such payment, God cannot forgive, for He cannot "admit anything which is disordered in His kingdom." Either, then, the honour taken away must be repaid, or punishment must follow. Since satisfaction must be according to the measure of the sin, man cannot fulfil it. Even man's supereroga-

¹ Loofs quotes from the Canons of the time of Edgar of England a curious device by which a rich man through hiring many persons to fast for him can reduce a seven-years' fast to one of three days. "This is the relaxation of penance for a powerful man, and one rich in friends. But a man without power cannot act thus: but must look after the matter with more zeal in himself." *Leitfaden der Dogmengeschichte* ⁴, p. 494.

² It is possible, though not certain, that the praxis of the Church was derived from this feudal custom.

tory works are due to God, and, though that were not so, they would not suffice. To argue otherwise is to show that "you have not considered the gravity of sin." Sin is against God, and so of infinite gravity. What man could not do for himself, the God-man voluntarily did. His life was of supreme value, and so the giving of it was a worksomeritorious that God could fitly recompense that gift by remitting men's debts due to Him.

Anselm claimed that he had so clearly proved that God must needs be made man as to provide an argument convincing even to Jews and pagans. But his logic was less consistent than he thought. Rightly he taught that the glory of God was concerned in bringing men to the blessedness of enjoyment of Him. Yet when Anselm passes to the main part of his argument, this is forgotten, and God is presented not as the Father, nor even as the Creator, but as a private person, demanding satisfaction for the injury His honour had received.

But the chief defect of the theory lay, not in its logical incoherency, but in its religious inadequacy. The connexion between the Saviour and the saved is slight. Elsewhere Anselm speaks of "necessity"; here he can only speak of fitness. It was "fitting" that God should recompense the God-man for His immeasurable offering by remitting the debts of those who believed in Him.

Anselm's theory captured the imagination of the Church, and has still much influence on popular piety. His theory helped to dispel the crude view

that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the devil. Anselm's Prayers and Devotions show more clearly even than his treatise his own profoundly Christian gratitude to Christ for all that He had endured on men's behalf. Yet his theory brought loss as well as gain. The presentation of Christ's death as an infinite satisfaction paid by the God-man to God on man's behalf made Christ's love appear real and precious, but, even more than the theory it helped to displace, it obscured the love of God, for God, it teaches, received in Christ's death a satisfaction greater than all the debts men owed to Him. This theory, like the later penal theory of the Reformers, thus introduced into the Godhead a difference of character graver in its consequences than the Arian assertion of difference of substance. Christ gives; God receives. Not thus is the love of God revealed.

Anselm, as we have seen, emphasized the retrospective aspect of Christ's work. He failed adequately to relate that work to the reproduction of Christian character. It was this "subjective" side of the work of Christ which received poignant expression in the writings of Abelard. Here and there in his *Commentary on Romans* we find traces of the traditional views of the work of Christ as a ransom from the devil, and as an endurance of the punishment due to the sin of man. But Abelard's main interest in the death of Christ was in its manifestation of a love which could enkindle ours, and, in his more formal statements, he denied that the devil had any rights over man, or that God

needed to be reconciled to the world through the death of His Son. It was these denials which aroused the hostility of Bernard. In his letter to the Pope which secured Abelard's condemnation, Bernard complained that for Abelard the "whole reason for Christ's suffering and death was the display or commendation of His love towards us."

Bernard's own importance for the doctrine of Christ's work and person is to be seen, less in his defence of traditional orthodoxy, than in the influence of his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*. In this great classic of medieval piety, mysticism becomes Christocentric. The Christological dogmas are accepted, but devotion is inspired, less by the remembrance of Christ's Godhead, than by the remembrance of His human life. Bernard's love-dalliance is not the same as that faith in Christ of which the New Testament speaks, for in the highest stage of the mystic way awe is laid aside, that the soul may be united with Christ as a woman with her lover. Bernard realized the perils of the mystic way, and, using Rachel and Leah as the types of the contemplative and active life, remarks that "although Rachel is the fairer, Leah is the more fruitful." It is not wise "to linger too much in the sweetness of contemplation, for the fruits of preaching are the better."¹ Strangely different as is Bernard's love of Christ from the sober faith of such a one as St. Paul, he yet by his devout meditations on the human grace of Christ, the Bridegroom

¹ ix. 8 (quotations are from Eale's translation.)

of the soul, served to strengthen in the Church the remembrance of the beauty and the power of that human life of Jesus which the official dogmas of the Church tended to obscure. "The Name of Jesus" was for Bernard "as honey in the mouth, as melody to the ear, as a song of gladness in the heart." "But it is also a medicine. Is any of you sad? Let Jesus come into your heart; let His Name leap thence to your lips, and, behold, when that blessed Name arises, its light disperses the cloud of sadness, and brings back severity and peace." "Nothing is so powerful as the Name of Jesus to restrain the impulses of anger, to repress the swelling of pride, to cure the wounds of envy, to bridle the impulse of luxury, and extinguish the flame of fleshly desire; to temper avarice, and to put to flight ignoble and impure thoughts. For when I utter the name of Jesus, I set before my mind, not only a Man, meek and humble in heart, moderate, pure, benign, merciful, and, in short, conspicuous for every honourable and saintly quality, but also in the same individual, the Almighty God, who both restores me to spiritual health by His example, and renders me strong by His assistance."¹ "My philosophy is this, it is the loftiest in the world: to know Jesus and Him crucified." Medieval as was his type of piety, Bernard, at times, anticipates that discovery of God in Christ which led in Luther to the revival of evangelical religion. In the love of Christ could be seen the love of God. "The heart of

¹ xv. 6.

the Bridegroom is the heart of the Father, and of what character is that? Be ye therefore merciful, He says Himself, as your Father also is merciful."¹

Bernard's rediscovery of God in Christ found little expression in the formal theology of the Middle Ages. Here again we may take as illustration the consummate masterpiece of the greatest of medieval theologians, the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. As we have seen, the book begins with a discussion of the Being and Attributes of God, derived not from God's revelation of Himself in Christ, but from the natural theology of a modified Aristotelianism. In his treatment of the Incarnation, the manhood of Christ, though formally asserted, lacks clear meaning. From the very instant of His conception Christ had the full knowledge of the blessed² and so needed neither faith nor hope.³ The prayers He uttered in His earthly life were not the expression of His human need. They were "for our instruction. First that He might show Himself to be from the Father, and secondly to give us an example of prayer."⁴ Yet when Thomas passes on to consider the work of Christ, Christ's human nature receives a greater prominence, and as the Head of the Church He is brought into relationship with all believing men. Thomas reiterates the traditional interpretation of Christ's work as the means of redemption from the devil's power, but he lays most stress on His satisfaction

¹ lxii. 5.

³ III, Q. vii, 3, 4.

² III, Q. ix, 2.

⁴ III, Q. xxi, 1.

for the sins of the whole race. His satisfaction was not "sufficient" only but "superabundant," for "by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offence of the whole human race; first because of His exceeding charity, second on account of the dignity of the life laid down, and thirdly on account of the extent of the Passion."¹ Yet this satisfaction, Thomas teaches, avails only for pre-baptismal sins. For sins committed after baptism, some "punishment or suffering" must be endured, although "by the co-operation of Christ's satisfaction, much lighter penalty suffices than one that is proportionate to the sin."²

To Thomas faith and reason seemed in perfect accord, but that happy union soon proved unstable, and with the Renaissance Scholasticism fell into disrepute. Theology fell into decay, and ecclesiasticism became increasingly corrupt, but in the heart of the Western Church there was still enshrined the memory of Jesus. Nothing could quite destroy the sense of the debt men owed to the Saviour who had loved them unto death. Thus the way was left open for that rediscovery of God in Christ which marked the great first years of the Reformation.

It was this rediscovery of God in Christ which made of Luther the reformer. While still an obedient monk, he had found, like St. Paul before

¹ III, Q. xlvii, 2.

² III, Q. xlix, 3.

him, the impossibility of earning salvation by good works, and had gained the glad confidence of salvation through a faith in Christ which was a trust (*fiducia*) in His mercy.

His new conception of salvation found powerful expression in the *Primary Treatises* written in the year in which his breach with Rome was made complete. Thus in his tractate *On Christian Liberty*, he declared that, "A Christian man is the most free Lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful subject of all, and subject to every one."¹ We have here the paradoxical expression of faith's freedom and love's obligation. "It is not from works we are set free by Christ, but from the belief in works, that is, from foolishly presuming to seek justification through works."² Faith "unites the soul to Christ as the wife to her husband . . . so that whatsoever Christ possesses, that the believing soul may take to itself, and boast of as its own, and whatsoever belongs to the soul, that Christ claims as his." "Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of its Husband, Christ."³

We have here an immense reduction of doctrine, and a concentration on the one article of saving faith in Christ. No longer is Christ conceived as one of the many intermediaries between the soul and God.

¹ *Primary Works*, etc., E. T.², by Wace and Buchheim, p. 256.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 264 f.

He is the Christian's one Saviour. All that He did is ours, and all our need He has taken on Himself. "In our stead, and on our behalf. He has suffered law and sin and death to fall upon Him."¹ He suffered all that we should have suffered. "He had in His gentle, innocent heart, to feel God's wrath and judgement upon sin, to taste for us eternal death and damnation, and, in sum, to suffer what a condemned sinner has earned and must suffer eternally."²

We have here the so-called penal theory of the Atonement, but, in Luther, it is not so much a theory as the expression of his awed remembrance of Christ's self-identification with the believers' needs. That penal theory has often tended to obscure the love of the Father, whose wrath or justice is represented as placated by the death of the Son. Yet, as we have seen, of nothing does Luther speak with more moving power than of the revelation of God's love in Christ.³

The personal God revealed in the personal life of Jesus Christ, the sole Mediator and Saviour—that was Luther's great discovery. It was a discovery which was for long forgotten, and for this Luther himself was in part to blame. His sense of the identity of the believer with the Saviour caused him to lay much stress on the unity in Christ's incarnate person of the divine and human natures. To express this unity he fell back on the theory of

¹ *Weimar Edit.*, xxxvi, 693.

² *Op. cit.*, xlv, 240.

³ See earlier, p. 78.

“communication of attributes,”¹ and, later, in his controversy with Zwingli on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper so emphasized this recondite theory as to give it an importance, incongruous with his assertion of the primacy of justifying faith. In their eagerness to affirm the “ubiquity” of the body of Christ, Lutheran theologians so endowed the human nature of Christ with the attributes of the divine that His manhood came to seem unreal; in their rigid formulation of the penal theory they tended to subordinate God’s love to His justice. Once more there was the failure to “recognize God in Christ.”

Nor was the contribution of Calvinism all gain. Calvin’s formal theory of the doctrine of Christ’s person has a sobriety and unity which, as we have seen, were lacking in Luther. Like the School of Antioch and like Augustine, Calvin does not shrink from the assertion of the true manhood of the incarnate Christ. Only one who was very man as well as very God could be our Mediator. He needed to be very man, that He might in man’s stead “obey the Father” and “present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgement of God, and in the same flesh pay the penalty which we had incurred.” “Those who rob Christ either of divinity or humanity either detract from His majesty and glory or obscure His good-

¹This doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* had been taught by Cyril of Alexandria and was used by William of Occam to explain the real presence of Christ at the Communion Table by the transference to His body of the divine attribute of “ubiquity.”

ness.”¹ But although Calvin warns us that there is no “knowledge of God without Christ,”² he yet failed to make clear the revelation of God in Christ. God’s love was asserted, but more obvious in his scheme are God’s utter sovereignty, which predestinates for salvation only the elect, and God’s penal justice, which has to be placated before our sins can be forgiven.³

Rightly did Faustus Socinus complain of the Calvinistic construction that it spoke much of God’s justice when it dealt with the work of Christ, but ignored it in its treatment of the doctrine of predestination. For Socinus, Christ was Saviour only in the sense that He brought to us teaching about God and duty, and showed the way of attaining eternal life. Vigorously he denounced the penal theory of the Atonement. With that criticism many of us would agree, but in Socinianism there was lacking that rediscovery of Evangelical religion which marked the Reformation, and, because of this, it was inadequate to the experience of forgiveness through faith in Christ which orthodox Protestant theologians were seeking, in however blundering a fashion, to express.

The Socinian attack on the penal theory drew from the great Jurist Grotius *A Defence of the Catholic Faith on the Satisfaction of Christ*.⁴ This,

¹ *The Institutes*, II, xii, § 3. Quotations are from Beveridge’s translation of the final edition of 1559.

² *Op. cit.*, II, vi, 4.

³ *Cp. op. cit.*, II, xvi, 3.

⁴ Published in 1617.

although avowedly an apology for the penal theory, was actually a new interpretation of Christ's work which has had much influence on Protestant thought. The death of Christ was for Grotius the means by which God in His goodness willed to liberate us, on our faith, from the punishment of eternal death "without injury to the display of Divine justice." Thus the motive of the Atonement was not the satisfaction, but the display of the Divine justice. Sin is conceived, not as an offence against God's inviolable justice, but as a violation of public order, and so, in this "rectoral" or "governmental" theory, Christ's death is interpreted as "a weighty example against the immense faults of us all." Grotius employs the penal language of plaction, but his theory is not penal. As "all positive laws can be relaxed," God is not conceived as bound to meet the demands of justice, and the work of Christ is interpreted, not in its retrospective, but in its prospective aspect.

The theory as it stands seems too suggestive of the clever expediency of Caiaphas: "It is better that one man should die than that all the people should perish." Dr. R. Mackintosh remarks of it, "Is this really what any Christian believes in his heart of hearts about the sufferings of the Saviour, that they were designed to give him a salutary fright? The harsh old doctrine that Christ bore the pains of hell is dignified and beautiful compared with this contemptible scheme of administrative smartness."¹

¹ *Historic Theories of the Atonement*, p. 187.

In so far as the theory emphasizes the necessities of good government, it has no superiority over the penal view which makes punitive justice the inexorable attribute of Godhead. But Grotius' theory looks beyond itself to a truer view. In this book, which is not a systematic treatise, but only a reply to the arguments of Socinus, Grotius does not discuss the relation of God's justice to His love. Yet he asserts that "among all God's attributes love to the human race is pre-eminent," and his theory looks beyond the category of administrative expediency to an explanation of Christ's work which would show how the God of holy love freely forgives, yet so forgives as, in forgiving, to make us realize the guilt of sin, and empower us to a new life.

(iii) THE MODERN PERIOD

Not until the publication in 1821 of Schleiermacher's epoch-making book *The Christian Faith* did Luther's rediscovery of the nature of saving faith find adequate expression in theology.¹ Orthodox Protestantism had built upon the structure of natural theology a vast structure of dogmas to all of which assent was demanded. The Deist movement in England, and the Illumination movement in Germany, had rejected these dogmas, and, in rejecting them, had thought to dispense with Christianity, and to meet the needs of religion by

¹ The book is at last available in English in the translation published in 1928 of the second edition of 1831. A brief account of the development of Schleiermacher's thought is given in the writer's *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, pp. 160-73.

the assertion of truths which, it was claimed, reason could prove without the aid of revelation. In Schleiermacher, theology won at last a form congruous with the Reformation conception of salvation through faith in Christ. No longer is theology conceived as a congeries of doctrines. Instead, it is regarded as the temporary expression of the growing consciousness of redemption known and experienced in the communion of the Church. We have already noted the success and failure with which Schleiermacher developed his new view of the function of theology. His treatment of the work and person of Christ is of fundamental importance. Not only were both work and person interpreted through the corporate experience of the Church, but the traditional formulæ were subjected to a criticism which cannot be ignored by any who are ready to learn from this theologian of insight and devotion.

For Schleiermacher, the distinctiveness of Christianity lay in this: "that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth."¹ Those who share in the devout consciousness of the Christian Church find that Christ makes upon them the same impression that in His lifetime He made upon His followers. External evidences, like miracles and prophecies, thus become of subordinate importance. Christian faith has an inner certainty arising from that growing consciousness of redemption which has its origin in the total impress of Christ upon the soul.²

¹ § 11, E.T., p. 52.

² § 14, E.T., pp. 68-76.

The Christian estimate of Christ is thus inseparably connected with the experience of His work for men. The perfect adequacy of His work is the proof of the ideal perfection of the Redeemer.¹ The Redeemer is like all other men in virtue of the identity of His human nature, but He is "distinguished from them by the constant potency of His God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in Him."²

It is from this point of view that the work of Christ is interpreted. "The Redeemer assumes believers into the power of His God-consciousness, and this is His redemptive activity."³ "The Redeemer assumes the believers into the fellowship of His unclouded blessedness, and this is His reconciling activity."⁴ We have here a complete rejection of the penal theory. "Views of Christ's reconciling activity" are "magical which make the impartation of His blessedness independent of assumption into vital fellowship with Him."⁵ The suffering of Christ was, indeed, vicarious, but the vicariousness was that of His perfect sympathy.⁶ His suffering unto death was not a placation of divine justice. It was the representation "with perfect vividness" of "the way in which God was in Him to reconcile the world to Himself."⁷

Schleiermacher would have been himself the last

¹ § 93, E.T., pp. 377-85.

³ § 100, E.T., p. 425.

⁵ § 101, E.T., p. 435.

² § 94, E.T., p. 385.

⁴ § 101, E.T., p. 431.

⁶ § 104, E.T., p. 461.

⁷ § 104, E.T., p. 459.

to claim that he had reached the final interpretation of Christ's work and person. As we have seen, by beginning with the believer's experience of Christ, instead of with the historic Christ as known by experience, his construction obscured the revelation of God in Christ, and failed to do justice to those human traits of Christ—His moral conflict, His hunger, thirst and loneliness—which the Synoptic Gospels faithfully portray. Since the emphasis was on man's experience rather than on God's revelation, his portrayal of sin, and so of redemption, lacks the moral realism of a St. Paul. But if he failed to reach the goal, he showed the way. He taught men to distinguish between the immediate utterances of Christian experience, and the dogmas which embody that experience in the language of past ages. No longer were the doctrines of Christ's work and person to be deduced from "proof-texts" or external evidences. Instead, they are derived from the total impress of Christ upon believing men.

More important than Schleiermacher's own interpretation of Christ's work and person was his criticism of the orthodoxy of the past. In two respects, he set the problems for all later theologians.

(1) He showed the ethical inadequacy of the penal theory of the Atonement.

(2) He exposed the incongruity of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation with the orthodox formulation of the Trinity. The traditional doctrine of the Incarnation involves a manifoldness of

God, which is incompatible with the emphasis on His unity to be found in the interpretation of the Trinity which has been dominant in the West.

We have now to turn to some of the attempts which have been made to solve these two problems thus exposed.

(a) *The Reinterpretation of the Work of Christ*

Of the attempts made by German theologians to rid the penal theory of its unethical elements, this is not the place to speak.¹ On the doctrine of Christ's person, the contributions of German theology are of prime importance. On the doctrine of His work, we have in English books which, written in independence of German thought, well illustrate the newer approach to the doctrine of Christ's work.

Of great influence has been *The Vicarious Sacrifice*² of Horace Bushnell, a New England Congregationalist. His book is written, not with the precision of a formal theologian, but with the diffuse eloquence of a gifted preacher, and is a moving presentation of that Moral Theory of the Atonement which we have already studied in Abelard. He bases his theory

¹ The reinterpretations of Hofmann, Thomasius, Frank and Kähler are described in Dr. Franks' *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, ii, 296-328, 358-64. Their influence is to be seen in the writings of Dr. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, 1909, and *The Work of Christ*, 1910.

² First published in 1866. Our references are to the English edition of 1871.

on the very nature of love. "Love is a principle essentially vicarious in its own nature, identifying the subject with others so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evils."¹ Thus "there is a Gethsemane hid in all love."² The vicarious love of Christ "is not unique in kind, but supreme in degree."³ The love of Christ is the manifestation of the love of God. And since God is love, He too suffers. "If the sight of wrong were to meet the discovery of God only as a disgusting spectacle meets a glass eye, His perfection would be the perfection of a glass eye, and nothing more."⁴ Instead, "there is a Cross in God before the wood is seen upon Calvary, hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now even in the throne of the worlds. Let us come, then, not to the wood alone, not to the nails, not to the vinegar and the gall, not to the writhing body of Jesus, but to the very feeling of our God, and there take shelter."⁵ "It is in the revelation of the suffering God that the great name of Jesus becomes the embodied glory and the Great Moral Power of God."⁶

¹ P. 7.² P. 12.³ P. 68.⁴ P. 175.⁵ Pp. 35 f.

⁶ P. 181. Later Bushnell substituted for Books III and IV of his *Vicarious Sacrifice* his *Forgiveness and Law*. In it he interprets the Atonement, not only as the sympathy of self-identification, but as the "making cost" by God which is propitiation. His modification has had less influence than his original statement. That God "makes cost" to reconcile us to Himself, we may well believe, but that He needed to "make cost" to reconcile Himself to us seems to go perilously near to introducing human weakness into the character of God.

For the development of the doctrine of Christ's work Bushnell's book is doubly notable. Bushnell rejects the idea that God is "impassible," incapable of suffering, for the Cross is the revelation in time of the suffering heart of the Father. And he rejects altogether the penal theory of the Atonement, and yet as faithfully as any of its advocates finds in the Cross the prime impulse to Christian faith and gratitude.

No defence of the penal theory against the views of writers like Bushnell won such great popularity as *The Atonement*, by Dr. Dale, the most influential of English Congregationalists.¹ Yet Dr. Dale's book, though intended as a defence of the penal theory, was, in fact, a sign of its dissolution. The first half of the book is of lasting value. Against the attempts of some Broad Church theologians to minimize the significance of the Cross, Dale demonstrates its supreme place in the New Testament, and its intimate association in the thought of its writers with the forgiveness of sins. It is when he passes from fact to theory that Dale, for all the vigour of his style, shows indecision and perplexity. He strongly asserts the retributive view of punishment, and yet, at times, approaches nearer than he seemed to realize to the "rectoral" theory of Grotius, which formally he condemns. For a man of his Christian insight, it was impossible to speak of the Atonement as if it implied a distinction in character between the Father and the Son, or as if it were due to the

¹ 1875. Our references are to the twenty-fourth edition of 1905.

conflict in the Godhead of mercy and of justice. "There is no schism in the Godhead," whilst to speak of Christ's death as a ransom "paid by the Divine mercy to the Divine justice" is "mere rhetoric."¹ Dale sought to remove the difficulties in the penal theory by emphasizing the "original relation existing between the Lord Jesus Christ" "and the eternal Law of Righteousness, of which sin is the transgression," and the "original relation existing between the Lord Jesus Christ and the race whose sins needed remission."² His theory, because it is more Christian, lacks the consistency of more rigid forms of the penal theory. Dr. Rashdall has pointed out ruthlessly its inconsistencies, and speaks of the "very painful impression" made by "the constant succession of ambiguities and verbal juggleries."³ With greater insight, Dr. Oman speaks, instead, of "Dale's honest blunderings."⁴ The inconsistencies were not "sophistries," as Dr. Rashdall claimed. They were the inconsistencies of transition, and looked beyond themselves to a view of Christ's death too fully Christian to be expressed in terms of retributive justice.

Older than either Bushnell's or Dale's book is a book which to many of us to-day seems far more adequate and satisfying, McLeod Campbell's *The Nature of the Atonement*, first published in 1855.⁵

¹ P. 415.

² P. 419.

³ *The Idea of the Atonement*, 1920, pp. 493-5.

⁴ In his review of Dr. Rashdall's book in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Apr. 1921.

⁵ Our references are to the 1906 reprint of the sixth edition.

This book is more than a theological treatise ; it is a great devotional classic, which repays, as do few books on the Atonement, the most careful study. McLeod Campbell knew what the full penal theory meant, for he had been brought up in the Calvinism of the Scotch Church, and, in his young manhood, had been expelled from its ministry because he preached that Christ died for all, and not only for the elect. His sad experience compelled him to re-examine the penal theory. In logic, Calvinism was right. On the penal theory, Christ's sufferings can most consistently be construed as endured only for the elect ; that is the proof of its inadequacy, for " that cannot be a true conception of the nature of the atonement which implies that Christ died only for an election from among men."¹ Such a view of the Atonement " ceases to reveal that God is love." It makes of it an " arbitrary act," and as " an arbitrary act cannot reveal character," God would still be to us " an unknown God."²

As we have seen, the classic theories of the Atonement have been attempts to interpret its meaning through *a priori* conceptions of God's honour, His justice or His love. McLeod Campbell abandons all such vain endeavours. As he puts it, his is " an attempt to answer Anselm's question ' *Cur deus homo?* ' by the light of the divine fact itself, as to which the question is put ; instead of seeking an

¹ P. 51. McLeod Campbell is here referring to Owen's demonstration that Christ died only for the elect.

² P. 55.

answer as he has done, in considerations exterior to that fact.”¹ Because McLeod Campbell thus begins with “the divine fact itself,” he is able to bring into new unity the work of Christ for men. That work has at once a “retrospective” and a “prospective” meaning. And, in each, “the active outgoing of the self-sacrificing love in which the Son of God wrought out our redemption presents these two aspects, first, His dealing with men on the part of God, and secondly, His dealing with God on behalf of men.”² In its retrospective aspect, Christ on God’s behalf manifested God’s suffering over sin; on man’s behalf, His dealing with the Father took “the form of a perfect confession of our sins.”³ In its prospective aspect, Christ on God’s behalf brings to men eternal life, and, on man’s behalf, intercedes with God for men.

In textbooks on the history of the doctrine of the Atonement, attention is usually drawn to McLeod Campbell’s theory of vicarious penitence. “The perfect confession” made by Christ “of our sins” he describes as “a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgement of God on the sin of man.” “In that perfect response He absorbs” the divine condemnation of sin. “That response has all the elements of a perfect repentance in humanity for all the sin of man—a perfect sorrow—a perfect contrition—all the elements of such a repentance, and that in absolute perfection, all—excepting the personal consciousness of sin.”⁴ In consequence, McLeod Campbell’s

¹ P. xvii.

² P. 110.

³ P. 117.

⁴ Pp. 117 f.

interpretation is often coupled with that of Dr. Moberly in his *Atonement and Personality*.¹ But the difference between the two books is fundamental. For McLeod Campbell, "the first demand that the gospel makes upon us in relation to the atonement is, that we believe that there is forgiveness with God." For Moberly, forgiveness is "provisional." As Dr. R. Mackintosh puts it, for Moberly "there is no full forgiveness until nothing is left to forgive."²

Moberly begins his book with a discussion of the meaning of punishment, penitence and forgiveness, and because he thus begins not with "the divine fact itself," but with "considerations exterior to that fact," his book, for all its delicate beauty, is out of harmony with the fundamental New Testament experience. The strange joy which characterizes the New Testament is due to the assurance that God "justifies the ungodly," that "our sins are forgiven for His name's sake." It speaks of a salvation received through the response of faith. In Moberly's book, we read little of faith, much of penitence. Forgiveness is regarded not as an initial experience, but as a hoped-for end to be won only after long self-discipline. We are back again into legalism, though a legalism of a devout and spiritual kind. God's forgiveness is reduced to the measure of our poor ideas of what forgiveness means.³

¹ First published in 1901.

² *Historic Theories of the Atonement*, p. 223.

³ For an incisive criticism of this view see R. A. Knox's discussion of Dr. W. H. Moberly's essay in *Foundations* (which reproduces substantially his father's view). *Some Loose Stones*, pp. 164 ff.

It is not the idea of vicarious penitence which gives to McLeod Campbell's book its distinctive value. The idea of vicarious penitence is in itself as vulnerable as that of vicarious punishment. What makes his book of decisive importance is rather its method of approach, its resolute refusal to reduce the grace of God in Christ to our notions of His honour, or His justice, or even of His love. We have to abandon all attempts to say in advance what God must have done for our salvation, and, instead, to seek to explore the significance of what He has done in Christ. So interpreted, the Atonement becomes central, not for Christian doctrine alone, but for Christian ethics. "The witnessing of Christ for the Father" is not merely "a light condemning our darkness," but is "the intended light of life for us."¹ "If we refuse to be in Christ the brothers of men, we cannot be in Christ the sons of God."² In his book McLeod Campbell writes, as he says, "not with the interest of a theological controversy, but as a man communing with his brother man, and giving utterance to the deep convictions of his own heart as to the spiritual need of humanity, and the common salvation."³ The Atonement has to be seen by its own light. That is McLeod Campbell's great contribution to its doctrine. Rejecting the penal theory, he emphasizes the truth of the divine Fatherhood, but the Fatherhood of which he speaks is a Fatherhood stern with the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

sternness of perfect love. "Our need is to be measured, not by our own sense of need, but by what God has done to meet our need."¹ "To trace redemption to its ultimate root in the divine Fatherliness, and to regard that Fatherliness as leaving no room for the need of redemption are altogether opposite apprehensions of the grace of God."² McLeod Campbell's particular interpretation may have to-day no more than historic interest, but no book has more to teach us as we, too, try to understand the Atonement "by its own light."

(b) *The Reinterpretation of Christ's Person*

As we have seen, Schleiermacher not only showed the ethical inadequacy of the penal theory of the Atonement; he also showed the incongruity of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation with the traditional formulation of the Trinity. In the nineteenth century no problem in theology has been so laboriously explored as that of Christ's person. Not only has the attempt been made to remove the incongruity which Schleiermacher exposed; even more urgent has been the necessity so to express the doctrine of Christ's person as to do justice to the real humanity of His incarnate life, which the more careful study of the first three Gospels had at last brought into prominence.

From early times there have been, as we have seen, two types of interpretation of the person of Christ.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xix.

² *Op. cit.*, p. xxi.

The one interpreted Him as the Son of God incarnate, the other as the God-filled man. The first was represented in antiquity by the School of Alexandria; the second by the School of Antioch. The first type of interpretation expressed the unity of the incarnate person, but tended to obscure our Lord's real humanity. The second type did more justice to His historic life, but failed to make clear the unity of His person. In the modern period these two types of interpretation still persist, and the adherents of each type have sought to remove its traditional defect. To the first type belongs Thomasius's interpretation of Christ by the doctrine of His *kenosis*, or self-emptying. To the second, Dorner's interpretation of Him as the God-man.

Thomasius's view found full expression in the first two volumes of his book, *Christ's Person and Work: A Presentation of Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics from the Central Point of Christology*, which was first published in 1853 and 1855.¹

In the first volume of his work, Thomasius deals with the presuppositions of Christology—the Christian conceptions of God and man. "Our actual relationship to God compels us to assert that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are, at once, personally distinguished one from another, and essentially united one to another."² The Incarnation is possible because God has endowed man with a personality like His own, save that it is a personality, not absolute,

¹ His view had been outlined in articles published in 1845 and 1846.

² I, p. 56.

but creaturely. Of great importance for Thomasius's theory is the distinction he makes in this preliminary volume between the immanent and relative attributes of God. Holiness, love and power are attributes immanent in God. Without these, God would not be God. They belong to the existential Trinity. But omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence are relative attributes. They are not inherent in the Godhead, but express God's relationship to the world.¹

From these presuppositions, Thomasius proceeds in the second volume to construct his theory. Lutheran theologians had sought to explain the unity of Christ's incarnate person through the reception by His humanity of the attributes of the divine. In this way, they had made unintelligible our Lord's actual human life and inner conflict. Thomasius, instead, speaks of the self-emptying, the *kenosis* of the Son of God.² The Incarnation is thus in itself a *kenosis*. As such it is the deepest mystery of the divine self-sacrifice, an act of love by which the eternal Son became like us, suffering and dying, to reconcile us to God that we might share in His majesty. In the incarnate Christ there was true Godhead and true manhood. Yet His consciousness was single, not double, for the divine was expressed in the creaturely personality of the human.³

¹ I, pp. 119-28.

² On Phil. ii. 7, from which this idea of the Son's "self-emptying" is derived, see earlier, p. 137.

³ II, pp. 130 ff.

This mystery of Christ's person Thomasius seeks, not so much to explain, as to describe. To do so, he falls back on the distinction in the divine attributes he had already postulated. The Incarnation was not the abandonment, but the manifestation, of the *immanent* attributes, of power, truth, holiness and love. Yet it was, at the same time, an abandonment of the *relative* attributes, like omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience, in which the immanent attributes find expression in the relation of the Godhead to the world. Thus the Mediator, in His historic life, not only did not use, He did not possess, the attribute of omnipotence. The power He had was the moral lordship of truth and love. His insight was not omniscience, and He was not omnipresent, but, like ourselves, bound by the limits of time and space.¹ Thus the incarnate Christ was truly man, and yet this man was Divine.

The theory was a brave attempt to preserve the faith in Christ as the Son of God incarnate, and yet to recognize and to express, as this type of interpretation had failed to do, the human limitations of this earthly life. "Orthodox" it was not, for the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325 had anathematized those who said that the Son of God was "subject to change," whilst the definition of the Council of Chalcedon of A.D. 451 had asserted that the two natures of the incarnate person "existed without confusion or change." Later, the Formula of Concord of A.D. 1580, the authoritative symbol of the

¹ II, pp. 215 f.

Lutheran Church, to which Thomasius belonged, had condemned any real *kenosis* as "a horrible and blasphemous interpretation." But Thomasius claimed that only by a theory of *kenosis* could Christ's real humanity be asserted, and the intimate union of His divine and human natures preserved.

Thomasius's theory was vigorously attacked by Dorner, on the ground that it impinged on the doctrine of the immutability of God. To this Thomasius replied that that doctrine could be so emphasized as "to imperil God's love, and reduce His power to impotence." "A God prevented by His immutability from conditioning Himself in love, and from allowing Himself to be so conditioned as He wills, is not the God of whom the Scriptures speak. Such a God could not become man. He would, at most, be able to impart Himself to man ; man He could not become."¹

Of the later modifications of this theory, this is not the place to speak.² In Germany the "kenotic" theory has long since lost its influence.³ In England the theory has aroused much interest, and this type of interpretation has still its devout and learned exponents.⁴

¹ *Op. cit.*, 2nd edit., pp. 552 ff.

² The fullest account in English of these theories is to be found in A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*.

³ The last German book advocating the kenotic theory seems to be that of the Swedish theologian Bensow, *Die Lehre von der Kenose*, 1905.

⁴ It was advocated by Drs. Fairbairn, Forreast and Forsyth. It receives an increasingly cautious expression in the writings of Dr. Gore, and is accepted in the greatest of English books on *The Person of Jesus Christ*, that of Dr. H. R. Mackintosh.

Many to-day who sympathize with Thomasius's aims shrink from accepting the "kenotic" theory on the ground that it is unduly speculative and attempts to describe a mystery which must always be beyond our earthly comprehension. That was not a criticism which could have been brought against Thomasius by Dorner, his chief contemporary opponent, for Dorner's own construction shows to the full that confidence in speculation which Hegelianism had given to that age.

Dorner's views find their final expression in his *System of Christian Doctrine*, published in 1879-81, in his venerable old age.¹

Like Thomasius, Dorner discusses the Doctrine of the Trinity before dealing with the Person of Christ. His treatment of this doctrine is a restatement, owing much to Hegelian dialectic, of the Augustinian doctrine of the Trinity, found in the so-called "Athanasian" Creed. The "threefoldness" of God is not of persons, but of "hypostases," modes of being. It is God who is personal. "The Organism of the absolute divine Personality" is "the eternal result of the eternal Self-discrimination of God from Himself, together with the equally eternal re-entrance into Himself."² The Incarnation is to be regarded, not as a momentary act, but as a process. With Christ's human growth there

¹ E.T., 4 vols., A.D. 1880-2. His views found earlier expression in his massive *History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, E.T., 5 vols., 1861-3, from the second German edition of 1856.

² *System of Christian Doctrine*, E.T., i, 412.

went an increasing receptivity which made possible the increasing appropriation of the human by the divine. This union of the divine and human in the God-man was consummated only on the Cross, and was made manifest in the Resurrection. It is a theory which later was to find more concise expression in Kähler's interpretation of Christ's person as a "union of the Godhead and the manhood" by "a reciprocity of two personal movements, on the one hand, a generative activity from the standpoint of the eternal Godhead, and, on the other hand, a receptive activity from the standpoint of the developing humanity."¹

The theories of Thomasius and Dörner have importance as speculative attempts so to interpret Christ as to make clear the human terms on which His earthly life was lived. We have in them modern reinterpretations of the ancient theories of Alexandria and Antioch. With the Alexandrian theologians, Thomasius saw in Christ the Son of God incarnate, and, by his emphasis of the "three-ness" of the Trinity was able to connect the incarnate with the pre-incarnate life of Christ. Dörner, with the School of Antioch, saw in God, not so much the Son of God incarnate, as the God-man. His theory does justice to the development of Christ's human life; but, by his emphasis on the unity of the Trinity, he made less clear the continuity of the person of the incarnate Christ with the pre-incarnate Son. If an age of speculation were

¹ *Die Wissenschaft der Christlichen Lehre*, p. 339.

once more to return, we should have much to learn from each. But the age of speculation passed. The Hegelianism which had inspired confidence in the power of the human reason to explore the mysteries of the Godhead proved, in the end, less the friend than the foe of faith, for it led to the substitution of the Christ-idea for the person of Christ. Meanwhile, historical research had seemed for the time to bring in jeopardy the Christian facts. Interest in speculative theories waned, and has not yet revived. It was useless to indulge in elaborate explanations of Christ's person when the faith in His final significance seemed to be in danger. The dominant influence in German theology came to be that of Ritschl, who, escaping himself from the glamour of Hegelianism, sought to lead the Church back from all speculation to the sure and simple fact of the historic Christ, who, whatever be the mystery of His person, has for us the value of God, for He has brought to us a revelation of God and of God's purposes, which, though it does not satisfy our curiosity, is yet adequate for our religious needs.

Ritschl's views are most clearly given in the third volume of his *Justification and Reconciliation*.¹ Christianity differs from other religions in the place which it assigns to its Founder. He Himself is the perfect revelation of God, and, through "His peculiar relation to God," "He lived a life of mastery over the world such as makes possible the community in which each Christian is to attain the

¹ 1874, E.T. from third edition, 1900.

similar destiny of the life eternal." "This twofold significance" of Christ, as "the perfect revealer of God and the manifest type of spiritual lordship over the world, finds expression in the single predicate of His Godhead."¹

Christ is the revealer of God, and His revelation is known in the community of believing men. In what He did as man, "His Godhead is manifest and savingly effective."² Like other men, He had His vocation, but His vocation differed from that of other men in that it was of universal range. His vocation it was to be "the Founder of the Kingdom of God," "the Bearer of God's moral lordship over men," and the sufferings and death which He endured, He endured in loyalty to His vocation. This vocation He knew to be God's ordinance for Him. The end for which He strove was the Kingdom of God, and thus His self-end was one with God's. The revelation of God which has come to us in Him is not so much teaching as "His whole activity in discharge of His vocation." In other words, in Him, "the Word of God is a human person."³

The origin of the Person of Christ did not seem to Ritschl a fit "subject for theological inquiry, because the subject transcends all inquiry." "As Bearer of the perfect revelation, Christ is given us that we may believe on Him. When we do believe on Him, we find Him to be the Revealer of God."⁴

¹ E.T., pp. 388 f.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 448-51.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 393.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 451 f.

Our relationship to Him is better described as one of faith than of love, for love implies equality and leaves undecided "whether we put ourselves on a level with Christ or subordinate ourselves to Him. But faith in Christ includes the confession of His Godhead and His dominion over us, and thus denies the possibility of equality with Him." "As Christ takes the place of God, faith in Him is necessarily a kind of obedience."¹

Of the pre-existence of Christ and of the nature of His risen life Ritschl spoke with much reserve. Theology had for him as its sole concern what is revealed, not what remains beyond our human apprehension. In an age of uncertainty and hesitation he called the Church back to the central certainty of the Christian faith: God revealed in Christ. We may learn from Ritschl to begin, not with our speculations about what God is, or what God must do for men, but with the historic life of Christ, His perfect fulfilment of His vocation, which is, at the same time, the perfect revelation of God to men, and the means by which we, too, may enter into fellowship with God.

We find a similar concentration of interest in the writings of Ritschl's friend Herrmann, whose chief book, *The Communion of the Christian with God*,² has had in England a greater influence than any of Ritschl's writings. With prophetic power, he

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 594.

² First German edition, A.D. 1886. Our references are to the second English edition of 1906, from the fourth German edition of 1903.

spoke of the discovery of God in Christ. "We do not merely come to God through Christ. It is truer to say that we find in God Himself nothing but Christ."¹ "The man who feels the strength of Jesus' love, and sees that confidence of victory which welled up from His peace of soul, will no longer see an historical problem in Jesus, but a Reality before whom he bows." "The Person of Jesus alone can give a man the invincible certainty that it is the almighty power of His Father in heaven which rules in the boundless world."² Of the existence of the risen Christ Herrmann spoke with glad confidence, yet he, too, refused to explore the nature of His person.

The later history of Christian thought has shown that, great as was the contribution which Ritschl and Herrmann made, it is impossible to stop where they stopped. The prime Christian fact of God revealed in Christ has, indeed, an importance and a certainty greater than any interpretations of it. But such interpretations have their place, and thought cannot be confined within arbitrary limits by the prohibitions of theologians who are distrustful of speculation. Whereas some of the later Ritschlians passed from the acceptance of the prime Christian fact to the cautious exploration of its implicates and the explicit assertion of the eternal existence of Christ in God,³ others receded into a

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

³ *E.g.* J. Kaftan and Haering, on whom see the writer's *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, pp. 198-201.

lower view of Christ which, instead of confessing His Godhead, was content to affirm His unique religious importance.

That lower view of Christ seemed to many a generation ago both simple and attractive. It spoke of Christ in terms of fervent gratitude and devout reverence. It sought to modernize Him, and make Him intelligible to an age not yet disillusioned by the tragedy of the war. That reconstruction has not stood the test of time. Wherever else the " eschatologists " have failed, they have, at least, shown that the genial picture of Jesus of such a book as Bousset's *Jesus* is not the picture which the Gospels give. The attempts to explain Him in merely human terms have proved inadequate and self-contradictory. He will not fit into our categories. He is more than the supreme religious hero of our race, the first true believer in God the Father. He is faith's object as well as faith's pattern, and His question " Who say ye that I am ? " is one which we are still unable to evade.

Our immediate concern is not with New Testament Theology nor with the history of Christian doctrine, but with the present meaning of that Word of the Gospel which it is the Church's privilege to proclaim. Yet that present meaning could not be explored without some reference, not only to the witness of the Gospels and to the classic interpretations of the other New Testament books, but to some of the later formulations of Christ's

work and person. If it be the task of theology, as we believe, to express in the language of our age the revelation given to us in Christ and known through the corporate experience of believing men, then we cannot ignore those statements in which in the past the faith of the Church has found expression. For doctrines so central as these, history is a teacher whose lessons we cannot afford to miss. The failures as well as the successes of the past may guide us to our own approach.

It is through our experience of Christ's work that we learn the meaning of His person, and it seems well to explore the significance of His work before attempting to speak of the mystery of His person.

(iv) AN APPROACH TO THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S WORK

We have seen that the most famous theories of the Atonement have sought to express the meaning of Christ's work through preconceived ideas. Anselm, "putting Christ on one side," argued how God's honour must be satisfied; the Protestant Schoolmen began from considerations of the requirements of strict penal justice; later theologians, like Bushnell, have begun with the conception of God's love, or, like Moberly, have sought first to state the meaning of forgiveness and of penitence. All these theories had elements of value, and, since they expressed the meaning of Christ's work through conceptions congenial to many in their age, won

wide acceptance. Yet, if our conception of the method of theology be right, they erred in beginning with preconceived ideas of God's honour, justice or love, instead of with the saving fact itself, God's revealing and reconciling work in Christ. That, as we have seen, was McLeod Campbell's decisive contribution to the exploration of this doctrine. The Atonement "must be seen in its own light." We begin by seeking to understand what God has done; we dare not begin by saying what we think God required to do. Forgiven, we have to learn to forgive, but we cannot gauge God's forgiveness by our own, or speak as if God must conform to our poor notions of the requirements of offended honour or undeviating justice. Nor can we, on the other hand, assume that our needs are only those of which apart from Christ we know, so that we speak as if God's forgiveness were of small account, and think that God's love could have its way at little cost.

At the beginning of this chapter we glanced at the presentation of the saving work of Christ given us in the Synoptic Gospels. That work did not begin when He went up to Jerusalem to die. Throughout His short and crowded ministry, He was the Saviour of those who, by their faith, received His grace. As we have seen, He identified Himself with the establishment of God's Kingdom, and spoke as if the blessings of that Kingdom could already be in part experienced. Through Him, men could be certain of the Father's love and power, and, freed from anxiety, could live already as God's children. The

ills which He removed were not of the soul alone. He healed men of their diseases, and in His healing work saw the sign of the Father's power and the irruption into this age of the resources of the age to come. Perfectly He fulfilled His own vocation, and in that fulfilment revealed the Father's love. As we read the story of His life, we may gain a confidence of God's love, which of ourselves we could not win. Even in Gethsemane and on the Cross He called God "Father" and through His trust in God many a man at the time of his bitterest need has learnt to trust the Father's love.

Yet with that trust went awe. The Father who has regard to His children's needs, and to whom we may pray for to-morrow's bread, is the Father whose name we have first of all to hallow, whose will we have to seek to do. His message of the Father's love made sin seem not less sinful but more. Before God, we have no desert. When we have done all, we have only done what it was our duty to do. We are still unprofitable servants. And yet, by the strange paradox of grace, God calls us His children, and requires us to be "perfect" as He is. Children must be like their Father, as servants are not required to be like their master.

As we have seen, the God whom Christ revealed is a God of love and holiness and power. Love which is holy, holy love which has power, power which is not arbitrary, but is the power of holy love.¹ It is a revelation which has come to us not through

¹ See earlier, pp. 86-96.

what Christ said alone, but through what He was. And this revelation found its full expression in His death. There His vocation was consummated, there was shown to the full that love and holiness and power of the God whose work He did. The death which seemed to be the sign of failure He accepted as a necessity of His vocation. He spoke of it as a ransom for the many, connected it with the new covenant of forgiveness, and believed that it would consummate, not interrupt, His work for men.

To the Cross there succeeded the Resurrection, and the disciples, who had feared that they had trusted Jesus in vain, were now assured that His death was in accordance with God's will, and, in His death, they found the most poignant expression of the meaning of His life. The common confession of the Christian Church was this : that Christ died for our sins and rose again. Men's deepest needs were met in Him. There the early Church was one, though in their conception of these needs, they differed according to their temperament and upbringing. It was left to St. Paul to discover the deepest meaning of the Cross, and see in it not only the final revelation of God's love, but God's supreme reconciling act. God was in Christ, not that He might be reconciled, but that He might reconcile the world unto Himself. Law and legalism were inadequate to express God's dealing with the race. The glory of God was not to be seen in vindictive justice ; it was to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. That was St. Paul's prime certainty. Whatever

powers of evil there be, none of them could separate him from the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the holy love Christ's Cross reveals St. Paul found his Gospel and his ethics, his confidence in God's forgiveness and the constraining of Christ's love.

We have seen how later thinkers have expressed the meaning of Christ's work by categories derived from non-Christian sources. Yet amid all the variety of interpretation, the Cross has remained central in the devotion of the Church; and with adoring gratitude in every age men have remembered that death through which has come the full assurance of forgiveness and new power.

The Cross speaks more powerfully than do any explanations of it. In it we can discern *the holy love of Christ, the revelation of God's character and rule, and the measure of our need, and of the way in which our need is met.*

In the Cross we discern the holy love of Christ. In days of ease men may desire

“ Him, not of Calvary, but of Nazareth,”

and complain of

“ The Cross, the crown of thorns, the anguished eyes,
The cruel wounds unstaunched and bleeding yet—
Ever the same wan form before me set,
All out of tune with the proud, glorying skies ! ”

And at times, the Man upon the Cross has been so depicted as the passive victim of intolerable suffering, that it is not surprising that some are repelled by

“ this show of wounds and death.”¹ If the story of the Cross were only the story of outraged innocence, we might be glad to forget it, for it would then appear as the final contradiction of God's love and power. If He, the sinless, suffered through a cruel fate, what worse instance could there be of God's failure to protect the just? But that is not what the Gospels tell us. They speak of One who went up to Jerusalem, knowing that there He might meet His death, and who did so, because thus alone could His vocation be fulfilled, and His work for God and men completed. As we read again the story of His last supper with the disciples, of the scenes at His trials before the chief priests and the Roman Governor, we do not see in Him a passive victim, but One adequate to His own needs. Even when mocked and bleeding He could remember Peter, and give him the look that meant his restoration; on the way to the Cross, for all the weakness of His body, He could sorrow for the daughters of Jerusalem, because of the sufferings which they would experience, and on the Cross He could pray for those that nailed Him there that they might be forgiven, for they knew not what they did. The words of an early disciple expressed the common experience of the Church. Herein is love that He laid down His life for us.

And in the Cross is to be seen not only the holy love of Christ, but the revelation of God's character and rule. As we have seen, some theories of Christ's

work have obscured the love of God by speaking as if God's first concern was with His offended honour or His vindictive justice. However carefully theologians may have qualified these views, their popular effect has been to create the impression that whilst Christ is One who loves men, God is primarily a Ruler who must be appeased, or a Judge whose penal justice has somehow to be met. Some of us who were brought up under the influence of the penal theory can remember how as children we prayed to Christ, for He seemed kind ; to God we dared not pray, for He seemed stern and harsh. There are still many who are more sure of the love of the Son than of the love of the Father, whilst some, less reverent, can sympathize with the little Boer girl in *The Story of an African Farm*, who, in her hour of need, knelt down and prayed, if prayer it was, " I love Jesus, but I hate God." Of such ideas there is no trace in the Gospels, nor, as we have seen, do St. Paul's legal metaphors convey a legal conception of God's relationship with men. It was God who reconciled, who took the first step in reconciliation. The Cross is the final expression of the holy love of God. The Cross on Calvary is the manifestation in time of the holy love of God which suffers that it may save. And Good Friday was followed by Easter Day. That was God's seal upon Christ's self-dedication ; that the sign in history of the power of the redeeming love of God. We live in a world in which sin is followed by loss. Yet judgement, as St. Paul discovered, is a means,

and not an end. God's relationship to men finds its first full expression in Christ's Cross. There we see God's forgiveness—a forgiveness, not an amnesty. A ruler may decree an amnesty for rebellious subjects in whose character he has no interest. But forgiveness is a personal relationship. It is concerned, not with the mere "letting off" of punishment, but with actual reconciliation. And this the Cross effects. We love because He first loved us. We know that the holy love of the crucified is the holy love of God, the last secret of His character and rule.

And in the Cross we have the measure of our need and of the way in which that need is met. Sin in being forgiven is exposed. That is an element of the work of Christ which in the reaction against old orthodoxies our age tends to forget. God is our Father; but we may not on that account speak as if forgiveness were a matter of course. We think, for instance, of the lines in one of George Macdonald's books:

" Here lie I, Martin Elginbrod,
Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God.
As I wad dae, were I Lord God,
And ye were Martin Elginbrod."

Such flippancy is alien from the whole New Testament conception of forgiveness. Its writers spoke of God's love with glad surprise, and the confidence in His love did not remove their sense of awe. God's free forgiveness was to them, not a truism, but a paradox.

We do not require to know the measure of our need in order to be forgiven. But as forgiven men we learn to know our need. Our certainty of God's forgiveness has come to us, not through a blithe herald of God's love, Himself untouched by sorrow, and unhurt by human sin, but through the holy One, who yet was hated and crucified. And that makes all the difference. We cannot equate condition and desert. The Cross itself is the supreme contradiction of such an equation, for it was the sinless One who suffered there. Yet God in His mercy has placed us in a moral order where acts go on to their effects. And the effect of sin is most clearly seen in the Cross of Christ. The sin of men killed the sinless Lover of the race. That is sin's most awful condemnation. If it were true that "we needs must love the Highest, when we see it," we might lightly estimate our need. But when the Highest came, men crucified Him. And who is there who has passed beyond the naïve self-confidence of youth who dares affirm that if he had been living then he would not so have acted? We like to feel that we would not have been among the few who sought His death, or have joined with the less guilty crowd who shouted, Crucify. And yet at times, it may be, we are less confident of this, for we know how He disturbs our peace. Like Peter, we have denied Him, like the other disciples, we have proved cowards in the time of need. So the story of the trial and crucifixion brings to us not only the message of forgiveness, but the condemnation of our

sin. Though we hold no penal theory of the Atonement, yet we, too, may sing :

“ Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.”

And this forgiveness is not a mere legal fiction. The love of Christ constrains us. That He was willing for our sake to endure the Cross shows His holy love, which was the holy love of God. That even on the Cross He remained faithful shows His power actually to transform our lives. He who endured the Cross was raised from the dead. Through Him, now, as in the first days of the Christian preaching, men are reconciled to God and freed from the tyranny of sin, from bondage to the seen and the temporal. In reconciling men to God, He reconciles them to their lot, and enables men to-day to endure sorrows which come, not from their own, but from others' sins, filling up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ.

We cannot interpret the Atonement by *a priori* considerations. We could not have foretold that in this way God would meet our need, for God's grace surpasses our best imaginings. But now that God has met our need, we can see that in no other way could there have come to us a forgiveness which arouses in us, not hope and gratitude alone, but awe ; our sins are so forgiven as to make sin abhorrent to us.

It may be said that all this is only “ subjective,” that we have here no “ objective ” theory of the

Atonement. That criticism seems irrelevant. Reconciliation is not a process, but a personal and mutual act. If we can see that the way in which God has met our need in Christ is the way in which that need can best be met, then, if we wish to speak of "objectivity," we can say that what we know to be "subjectively" necessary for our salvation was "objectively" necessary for such a God as Christ reveals. It was "objectively" necessary, not because God had to meet some requirement external to His Fatherly love before He could forgive—whether that requirement be conceived as the demands of offended honour or of vindictive justice—but because God is our holy Father, and the Kingdom which expresses the purpose of His will for men is at the same time the goal of man's beatitude. Because God is the Father, what was best for His children His holy love made it "necessary" for Him to do.

Simple as such a statement appears, it yet seems to express what the classic theories of the Atonement sought to emphasize. We cannot, like Anselm, speak of God as an "offended party," or argue from *a priori* considerations of His honour. Yet Anselm's warning, "Thou hast not yet considered the gravity of sin," is not ignored. We know that sin cannot be merely "let off." In being forgiven, it has been exposed. And the "satisfaction" of which Anselm spoke, we understand, not as a satisfaction to God's offended honour, but as the satisfaction which God receives in the perfect filial response of Christ,

and in the filial relationship into which, through Christ, believers grow. Nor can we, with the later orthodoxy of Protestantism, make retribution the final principle of God's rule, and so speak of Christ's death as a vicarious punishment. Yet for us, too, the guilt of sin is manifested in the Cross. We, too, can say, although in another sense, Christ suffered for us; He suffered because of our sin. And inadequate as was the view of Grotius, its essential truth is here retained. A mere amnesty is contrary to God's rule. Sin must be shown up even as it is forgiven. With Abelard and the exponents of the "Moral" theory of the Atonement, we see in the Cross the exhibition of the love of God, but it is a love which condemns sin even as it forgives.

Thus understood, the Cross becomes the luminous centre, not of Christian doctrine only, but of Christian ethics. Through it we know that the last secret of God's rule is not force nor recompense, but holy and redemptive love. Thus it not only brings to us the glad confidence of forgiveness. It commits us to a transvaluation of the values by which we daily judge, for if the holy love of the Cross be eternal and divine, then it must also be the means by which we test the problems of private and of public life.

(v) AN APPROACH TO THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S PERSON

From the exploration of Christ's work we pass to the consideration of His person. "To know

Christ," as Melanchthon said, "is to know His benefits, not to contemplate His natures and the modes of His Incarnation."¹ Whatever be the origin and explanation of His person, this, at least, is clear to Christian faith : in Him God is revealed. Through Him, believing men are brought into a relation of communion with God, so that we become the children of the God who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of this chapter we sought to gain from the Synoptic Gospels an impression of His person. We saw His certainty of God, His confidence that He could meet the needs of all who would come to Him to take His yoke and gain rest unto their souls. It is not so much His claims that are important as the place He takes in the preaching of God's Kingdom. Always He was adequate to His own vocation, and that vocation was unique in kind, and universal in significance. He was inseparably connected with the Kingdom He proclaimed. In His healing works the powers of the New Age were manifest in this present age. He preserved to the full the Jewish awe of God, and yet spoke of God with utter intimacy and trust. His life was beset by human limitations. He knew hunger, thirst, weariness and sorrow. He needed to pray, not for others only, but for Himself. He

¹ First edition of the *Loci Communes*, edited by Plitt-Kolde², p. 63. These words, which well express the new intuition of the first great Reformation years, were omitted in later editions, for by then a schematic orthodoxy was once more dominant. Cp. earlier, p. 13.

lived by faith and hope. And yet for all the lowliness of His lot, He was men's Master, speaking of God, and of that Law which men regarded as the Word of God, with a confidence and freedom which seemed to some of the religious leaders of His age presumptuous, indeed blasphemous.

His death, which seemed to mark the failure of His life, became, as we have seen, the most moving symbol of the Christian faith—the sign and pledge, not of His defeat, but of His victory. The early Church proclaimed this crucified Jesus as the Risen Lord. Yet this faith in Christ was not an impingement on faith in God. Instead, faith in God in the Christian sense was made possible through faith in Christ. For men like St. Paul and St. John faith in Christ was indistinguishable from faith in God. And because of this their faith in Christ was not idolatry. It was one with their faith in God. Their faith in God gained its meaning and its confidence from faith in Christ.

That is the paradox of New Testament Christianity. It centres in One who lived on earth a truly human life and who yet so belonged to the life of God that faith in Him was faith in God.

And, in spite of the long course of Christological controversy, that paradox still remains unresolved. In the past, as we have seen, the paradox has often been concealed, by ignoring the reality of the manhood which formally was affirmed. That the witness of the Gospels makes impossible. They speak of One who was truly man. As impossible

is the attempt made in the last century to explain Jesus merely as a man—the first true believer in God the Father, the supreme religious “hero” of His race. The old harsh alternative, “either He was God or He was not good,” has lost for us its meaning, for we have learnt that a man may be good and yet self-deceived. But the attempt to depict Jesus as a man alone involves either the excision from the Gospels of everything incompatible with this hypothesis, or the acknowledgement that He who has been to believing men the Way, the Truth and the Life was Himself a visionary, or a fanatic, assigning to Himself an importance unjustified by fact. The modern attempts to depict Jesus as man alone, though the noblest of men, have not failed because of any lack of learning or insight on the part of their authors. They have failed, because His life cannot be thus explained.

In this sense, the long course of Christian thought and experience has confirmed the ancient conclusion of the Church that its Lord is truly God and truly man. No view of Christ is adequate which denies or ignores either element of this paradox. But the recognition that Christ was truly God and truly man is one thing; the acceptance of the two-nature doctrine is another. The Definition of Chalcedon involves, as the Church later recognized, the view that in Christ there were two wills, one human, one divine. That seems in clear contradiction to all that we know of personality. And nowhere do the Gospels suggest that our Lord in His earthly life

willed sometimes as God and sometimes as man. This ancient explanation is too unsatisfactory to save us from the trouble of having to think of Christ in modern terms. It is better to have no explanation at all than an explanation which is false to fact. A modern defender of ancient orthodoxy asserts, "No two-Natures, no Incarnation, no Incarnation, no Christianity in any distinctive sense."¹ That statement simply is not true. It is possible to believe in the Incarnation, and yet reject the explanation of it which the two-nature theory affords.

The development of thought on the person of Christ, due to Schleiermacher's criticism of the traditional formulæ, can at least teach us to bring into unity our doctrine of Christ's person and our doctrine of the Godhead. As we have seen, the Western orthodoxy of the so-called "Athanasian" Creed, in its doctrine of the Trinity, so emphasizes the unity of the Godhead, that the three "persons" denote little more than eternal aspects of the Godhead. Yet in its doctrine of Christ's person, the dominant view has seen in Him the Son of God incarnate. But how can an eternal "aspect" of the Godhead become incarnate? We have to make our choice. If we emphasize the "oneness" of the Godhead, then we must seek for an interpretation of Christ's person which is congruous with this emphasis; or, if we hold a conception of Christ's

¹ Dr. Warfield, in his article on "The Two Natures," reprinted in his *Christology and Criticism*.

person which involves the triality, the "three-ness," of the Godhead, then that triality must be candidly acknowledged. We must not profess a unitary view of the Godhead and at the same time give an interpretation of Christ's person impossible on that unitary view.

And there is another lesson we can learn from the history of this doctrine. However we interpret Christ's person, we may no longer think of the divine and the human as disparate. Whatever else is uncertain, this at least is certain to Christian faith: in Christ God has been revealed. But if in a human life God could be manifested, then human personality must be sufficiently akin to God for the divine to be revealed in One who lived on earth as man. With Calvinism we do well to emphasize the awful difference between the holy and the profane, between God's perfection and our imperfection. Yet, in a sense, we may affirm, in contradiction to Calvinism, that the finite is capable of receiving the infinite, or rather, for such spatial metaphors are here out of place, that in a life lived in human conditions God can be made manifest to men. And however unpopular Ritschlianism may at present be, we may learn from it to begin with the known and not the unknown, with the actual revelation of God in the historic Christ as received by the corporate experience of the Church, and not with *a priori* ideas of the nature of God's eternal and triune life.

Of the two great types of interpretation of

Christ's person, the one, seeing in Him the God-filled man, the other, the Son of God incarnate, it is the former which is to-day the more popular. It is congruous with a unitary interpretation of the Godhead, and seems to have the advantage in simplicity.

Often this type of interpretation is satisfied with the assertion of the immanence of God in Christ. That interpretation may be in itself inadequate to the Christian certainty that God is known in Christ. We are reminded of a story told of the late Sir Henry Jones. In his earlier days he used often to preach in Welsh Chapels. To one chapel he was not asked back. A friend explained the reason. "They are told that you deny the divinity of Christ." To this he replied, "I deny the divinity of Christ? I do not deny the divinity of any man."¹ With this answer classic Christian faith cannot be content. A religion like Hinduism, which regards the supreme Divine Being as attributeless and unknown, can be content to think of Him, or rather of It, as immanent alike in the noble Krishna of the *Bhagavadgītā* and in the lewd Krishna of the late *Purānas*, in the capricious goddess Kālī, and, as many Hindus would now add, in Jesus Christ. But however much we emphasize our Lord's kinship with His brethren, we cannot, without a radical departure from New Testament Christianity, regard Him merely as one divine, in the sense that all men can be claimed to be. Christ has for the Christian

¹ Hetherington, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, p. 43.

a unique place. In Him, and Him alone, is the holy love of God fully revealed and operative. It is insufficient to say that God was immanent in Christ. We need to assert the uniqueness of that immanence by some such phrase as God's *absolute* immanence in Him. So qualified, the doctrine of God's immanence in Christ seems to many who share the classic Christian faith in Christ's unique importance an adequate interpretation of His person. Yet this interpretation is not free from ambiguity. For those who begin with the given, there is the obligation to affirm the reality of the human growth of the historic Jesus, and that, in itself, the assertion of the absolute immanence of God in Him does not secure. This type of theory seems to need the more precise statement which Dorner and Kähler afford. Beginning with the records of the historic life of Christ, we may, with Kähler, explain the historic facts as due to a "reciprocity of two personal movements, on the one hand, a generative activity from the standpoint of the eternal Godhead, and, on the other hand, a receptive activity from the standpoint of the developing humanity."¹

This interpretation of Christ as a God-filled man accords with that emphasis on the unity of the Godhead which is characteristic of Western orthodoxy in its formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet the other type of interpretation which sees in Christ the Son of God incarnate seems more congruous with the Church's religious estimate of

¹ See earlier, p. 188.

Christ. It was with the belief that Christ had risen that the Church began. The sense of the presence of the living Christ was not peculiar to St. Paul alone. It has been realized by many throughout the Church's history, and finds poignant expression in those hymns which better even than the Creeds express the Church's faith. The peculiar joy of the great festivals of the Church, Christmas and Easter Day, is due to this : that Christmas seems to speak of the self-abnegation of the eternal Son, and Easter Day of the Resurrection of One whose power is still felt by believing men. If we interpret Christ as the God-filled man, then we have to regard the most moving symbols of Christian devotion, not as expressions of facts, but as picture-words which need to be translated from the poetry of religion to the prose of theology. And the Communion Service, though still the precious memorial of the Redeemer's love, could no longer be regarded as the trysting-place of the exalted Lord with the redeemed community.¹ The interpretation of Christ as the God-filled Man seems simpler than the interpretation of Him as the Son of God incarnate. But simplicity is no proof of truth. And, for all the difficulty of the conception, the interpretation of Christ as the Son of God incarnate, though less simple, seems more adequate than the interpretation of Him as the God-filled man.

This second type of interpretation has often tended to obscure the reality of the human life of

¹ Cp. the writer's *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, p. 237.

the historic Christ. We have seen how Thomasius sought to express the real humanity of the incarnate Christ by his theory of *kenosis*. We dare not, with him, begin with a discussion of the nature of the Trinity, and of the differences in the divine attributes. If our approach to theology be right, it must be with the revealed that we begin, and we may not speculate how the Incarnation had to be. Now that Christ has come, we can see that in the limits of a human life the Divine has been revealed. We adore the grace of Him, who, for our sakes, became truly man, living by faith, and manifesting power in love, and regaining, in the fulfilment of His vocation, that glory which was eternally His. But if we thus interpret Christ as the Son of God incarnate, then, although we affirm the perfect unity of the Godhead in will and purpose, we are driven to affirm the real manifoldness of the Divine, and this, though contrary to the emphasis of Western orthodoxy, seems congruous with the Christian faith that God eternally is love.

To this conception we shall need to return when we speak of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.¹ We cannot claim that there is as yet any interpretation of Christ's person which is perfectly satisfying. The ancient philosophy of substance has proved inadequate to express the evangelical experience of communion with God in Christ. A philosophy of personality is alone congruous with Christian values. We have already the beginnings of such a

¹ See later, pp. 273-7.

philosophy, and we may hope that in time a personal philosophy will be found which will provide categories better fitted than any we yet have to express the mystery of Christ's person. But an explanation of Christ's person must always be beyond men's reach, if by "explain" we mean "put into a class." He is inexplicable, because He is unique. It is impossible to describe His person without being enmeshed in the antinomies of thought—the relation of time to eternity and of space to the infinite. But our prime concern is not with the antinomies of thought, but with our moral problem, with the nature of our human life, and the relation of the circumstances in which we find ourselves to the meaning and the purpose of the universe. All these problems are summed up in the one problem of the character of God, and the nature of His rule. And it is this problem which has in Christ its answer. Even if satisfying definitions could be found of Christ's place and person, they would not in themselves suffice. To say that Christ is God and man is not enough. Even if we could understand how One divine could be at the same time man, it would not meet our need. We should still have to go back time after time to the Gospels, that, being with Jesus, we may learn what God is and man might be. He did not come to tell men that God was triune, but to reveal the greater wonder of God's holy love.

The Gospels do not provide us with an explanation of Christ's person. They do more. They

present a Christ who still can give to us the certainty of God's holy love, a certainty which is inseparably connected with what Christ did and is. We cannot explain the mystery of His person, and yet in His person we have the answer to our deepest need.

Differences of interpretation are thus of subordinate importance. Overemphasis upon them hides the glad discovery of Christian faith that in Him we know God, and knowing Him, we know the secret of God's rule, and have the answer to our moral need. Mystery remains, and yet Christ may be to us not so much a mystery, as the light of life. Since it is in Him that God has been revealed, He becomes to us less a problem to be explored than a Gospel to be known and preached.

IV LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

(i) THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

CLASSIC Christian faith has spoken not only of an experience of the love of God, and the grace of Christ, but also of the communion or fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

It is to this sense of the possession of the Spirit that the New Testament assigns the strange power and joy of the first beginnings of the Christian Church. Already the disciples were persuaded of their Master's resurrection, and so were confident, at last, that He was the Messiah of whom the prophets spoke. Eagerly they waited for the "promise of the Father,"¹ and on the Day of Pentecost that promise was fulfilled. The significance of that fulfilment did not lie in the psychic phenomena with which it was accompanied; the utterance of unintelligible sounds is a familiar concomitant of overpowering religious emotion. It lay in the association of the reception of the Spirit with the risen Christ. "Enthusiasm," it has been well said, "in itself is revolutionary, but this enthusiasm was fettered to something definite and given."² The early Church believed that the Spirit had been

¹ Acts i. 4.

² R. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*³, I, p. 81.

sent by the risen Christ. It was through His exaltation that the resources of the Age to Come were now available for men, and the new enthusiasm was used to proclaim Jesus as both "Lord and Christ."

St. John's Gospel tells us that our Lord before His death promised His disciples that He would not leave them desolate or orphaned. He would send to them the Paraclete, who should lead them into all truth.¹ These words may have been coloured by the Christian experience of the Evangelist, but it is not in this Gospel alone that we have the belief that Jesus spoke of the coming of the Spirit after His death. St. Paul speaks, as does Acts, of "the promise of the Spirit"² in such a way as to suggest that it was the Church's common tradition that the Spirit had been promised by Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels the references to the Spirit are few. At Nazareth our Lord began His preaching by taking to Himself the words of Isaiah lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." "This day," He said, "is this scripture fulfilled."³ The irruption of the Kingdom was to be seen in this: that in the Spirit of God He cast out devils,⁴ and to His disciples He promised that they need not be anxious when brought before tribunals, for "the Spirit of their Father" would tell them what to say.⁵

The power our Lord had promised reached its

¹ xiv. 18 and 26; cp. xvi. 7-16.

² Gal. iii. 14; cp. Eph. i. 13.

³ Luke iv. 18 ff. ⁴ Matt. xii. 28.

⁵ Matt. x. 20; Luke xii. 12.

fulfilment at Pentecost. "Religion," says Dr. Whitehead, "is what the individual does with his solitariness."¹ The new power was appropriated by individuals. But Christianity was from the first a fellowship. Fellowship with the Spirit meant for the disciples a fellowship one with another, which made them eager to be together, and which found expression in corporate prayer and a common meal.

In the Old Testament the manifestation of the Spirit had been seen, not only in God's revivifying power, but in abnormal qualities and deeds,² and even in Palestine there was the danger that Christians should look for the signs of the Spirit's power, not in the production of Christian character, but in an excited enthusiasm unrelated to life's ordinary tasks. In the underworld of the Greek cities to which Christianity later spread that danger became acute and pressing. Christianity could there have become an orgiastic cult in which frenzied enthusiasm took the place of faith and love. How grave that peril was is shown by this: that at Corinth a Christian could in his excited speech call Christ "accursed," and yet believe that he was speaking by the inspiration of the Spirit.³

It was through the Christian insight of St. Paul that the Gentile Church was saved from wild

¹ *Religion in the Making*, p. 6.

² *E.g.* By the Spirit of the Lord Samson rends a young lion as if it had been a kid (Judges xiv. 6), and Saul in anger hews in pieces a yoke of oxen (1 Sam. xi. 6 f.).

³ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

fanaticism. He did not despise the psychic phenomena of intense enthusiasm. He too "could speak with tongues" more than they all, and, in spite of his copious resources of thought and language, found, at times, that his longing for God was too great to be expressed in intelligible words, whilst his joy at God's adoption of him caused him to cry out in the Spirit, "Abba Father."¹ He bade his converts not to "quench the Spirit," and even at Corinth would not have speaking with tongues forbidden. But when at Corinth reliance on the Spirit led to licence and excess, he warned the Christians there that ecstasy was no proof of truth. Those who in their frenzy denied that Jesus was Lord were inspired, not by the Spirit of God, but by demons such as those which as idolaters they had served.² Even where "speaking with tongues" was due to the Spirit's power, it was not the highest gift. Greatest of all the Spirit's gift was love—the love which showed itself in the reproduction of the character of Jesus.³ Speaking with tongues was a special gift, given only to the few. Love was not only a higher gift, but one which every Christian could and must possess. Of the special gifts, greater than the gift of tongues was the gift of prophecy, for by prophecy the Church was built up, and the Gospel made known to those that knew it not.

¹ Cp. 1 Cor. xiv. 18 and Rom. viii. 23 and 15.

² 1 Cor. xii. 1-3.

³ Cp. 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7, where the description of love is surely based on what Paul had learnt of the character of Jesus.

Thus to St. Paul the power of the Spirit was in close connexion with the historic revelation of God in Christ. That power was to be most clearly seen, not in the special gifts of the few, but in the love which every Christian had to show. The Spirit's gifts were given that the fellowship of the Church might be strengthened and enriched.

The Christian life could equally well be described as a life of faith, or as life in the Spirit, for faith is not man's act alone; it is the response to the Spirit's work. Illumination and energy are the prime requirements of religion. Both were gained through the Spirit. The Spirit gave to men not new revelations, but the rediscovery of the revelation given in Jesus Christ. The highest knowledge that the Spirit gives is knowledge of "the mind of Christ."¹ And the Spirit gave not illumination only, but energy to live according to the illumination given. Apart from the Spirit we live according to the "flesh," and do its works. In the Spirit we bring forth "the fruit of the Spirit." And the fruit of the Spirit is the reproduction of the love of Christ.² To sow to the Spirit is to reap life eternal, and in the possession of the Spirit we have the first instalment of our full inheritance of glory.³ "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," but because of the close association of the Spirit with Christ, the liberty of the Spirit is the liberty, not of licence, but of love. It is the liberty, not only

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 16.

² Gal. v. 16-23.

³ Gal. vi. 8; Eph. i. 14; cp. 2 Cor. i. 22.

to admire, but to will and to do what is well-pleasing unto God.

Closely as St. Paul connects life in the Spirit with life in Christ, he yet differentiates between the Spirit and the risen Christ. Even his words "The Lord is the Spirit" cannot, if studied in their context, be taken to mean that the Lord and the Spirit are identical.¹ Yet, although the Spirit and the risen Christ are not identified, they are most closely associated. To be "in the Spirit" and to be "in Christ" denote possession of the same privileges and character.

It is in this association of the Spirit with Christ that we have part of the distinctive adequacy of New Testament Christianity. Emphasis on present experiences alone may lead to religiosity without moral content, or to that kind of mysticism which seeks, as in Higher Hinduism, identity with a God who is conceived as impersonal and unknown. Emphasis on a past revelation alone leads, as the history of early Islam shows, to a religion of legalism, in which the present is put into bondage to the past. The classic Christianity of the New Testament was saved from both these perils. The Spirit was the Spirit of Christ and of the Father whom Christ revealed. Thus present experience was controlled by the past revelation, and the past revelation ceased to be merely past, and became part of the experience of the present. Adoption into sonship with God,

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17, on which see E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, p. 181.

life in Christ, and the possession of the Spirit were not three separate experiences. They were various aspects of the one experience which comes through faith in the God who is revealed to us as the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.¹

To St. Paul's classic description of the experience of the Spirit the later Church added little of value. When Christianity became completely Gentile, its thinkers spoke less of the Spirit than of the Word, the Logos, and transferred to the action of the Logos much that St. Paul had assigned to the Spirit. To St. Paul, the experience of the Spirit meant the life of faith. But St. Paul's conception of faith lost influence. As we shall see, Christian salvation was increasingly connected with the authority of the Church, and with a grace regarded not as a personal activity, but as something "infused" through the Church's sacraments. The revival of interest in the Spirit has been chiefly due to devout groups, whose members have tended at times to lose the close connexion of knowledge of the Spirit with knowledge of the historic Christ.

As was natural, the great doctrinal controversies of the early Church were concerned with the nature, not of the Spirit, but of the Son. Thus the First Œcumenical Creed, the Creed of the Council of Nicæa, of A.D. 325, was content merely to affirm belief in the Holy Spirit. Only when the Arian controversy was drawing to a close did the question of

¹ For a fuller statement of St. Paul's views see the writer's *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 175-80, 210-2.

the nature of the Spirit come into prominence. The solution of Catholic orthodoxy owes much to the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, who taught that the Spirit, like the Son, is of one substance with the Father, and is to be worshipped with the same worship.¹ This conclusion finds expression in the so-called "Nicene" Creed of common use, which affirms the Spirit to be "the Lord, the life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

This new orthodoxy of the Eastern Church emphasized the primacy of the Father, of whom the Son was "begotten," and from whom the Holy Spirit "proceeded." In the West, as in Augustine, the complete equality of the three "persons" of the Godhead was asserted, and the Holy Ghost was declared to proceed from the Son as from the Father. In course of time the words "and from the Son" (*filioque*) were interpolated into the so-called "Nicene" Creed,² and the Western insistence on this addition to the Creed was one of the avowed causes of the final schism between the Eastern and the Western Churches.

The rediscovery at the Reformation of St. Paul's conception of saving faith led to a closer association of the work of the Spirit with that Word of God which

¹ E.g. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* written about A.D. 375, and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, written some five years later.

² The first council to make this addition to the Creed seems to have been the Third Council of Toledo in Spain, of A.D. 589, which declared that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*et filio*).

to the Reformers was the chief of the means of grace. "Learn," said Luther, "how and when thou shouldst seek the Holy Spirit, not in the heights, above the clouds . . . but He is below on earth, as Christ shows and says when He spoke of the Comforter whom the Father shall send you."¹ For Luther "the gift of faith" and the "gift of the Spirit" were the same gift, for by faith we are saved. The work of the Spirit was to be seen in the Church with its preaching of the Word and its Sacraments. So, too, Calvin declared that faith was the "principal work" of the Spirit, and spoke of "the inner testimony of the Spirit" which brings to us conviction of the truths of which the Scriptures teach.²

The doctrine of the work of the Spirit thus introduces us to those conceptions of grace which still divide Christendom, and which find expression in the doctrines of the Church and of the Sacraments. It is to these doctrines that we have now to turn.

(ii) THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

The possession of the Spirit made of the first believers in Christ a fellowship of mutual love and service which found expression in a common meal, with which was connected the commemoration of the Saviour's death. To-day the phrase "Church and Sacraments" suggests, not fellowship, but division; so bitter have been the controversies as

¹ *Weimar Edit.*, xlv, 617.

² *Institutes*, III, i. 4. and I, vii. 5.

to what constitutes the Church, and what are the nature and efficacy of the Sacraments.

The various views on the Church and the Sacraments claim to find part at least of their support in the teaching of the New Testament, and it is this which provides the natural starting-point for our discussion.

As we turn to the Synoptic Gospels, we find that only twice is Jesus said to have spoken of the Church. Both these passages occur in St. Matthew's Gospel alone, and both are held by many scholars to be due, not to the teaching of Jesus, but to the influence of later tradition.

The simpler of the passages (Matt. xviii. 15-20) is concerned with the treatment of offences. If by *ecclesia* is meant, not a Jewish synagogue of our Lord's time, but a Christian congregation, then this passage gives directions for a time when Christians would form a Church or congregation separate from the Jewish community. But the passage as a whole is in marked contrast to other words of our Lord. The command to treat the man who will not heed the *ecclesia* as if he were a Gentile or a "publican" is thought to be unlike the word of One who was known as the friend of "publicans" and sinners, and to breathe a different spirit from the command in verse twenty-two to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven.¹ It is not surprising that even conservative

¹ If these words were spoken by Jesus, then to treat a man like a "publican" would mean to treat him with that kindness which Jesus showed to the despised classes.

scholars feel that the passage as it stands is not a transcript of the actual words of our Lord, but has been influenced by the beliefs and customs of the Jewish-Christian Church.

Even more difficult is the famous passage, Matt. xvi. 18, 19. "The binding and loosing" which in Matt. xviii. are described as the prerogative of the whole *ecclesia* are here assigned to Peter. Peter is to have the keys of the kingdom. On him as rock the Church is to be built. The meaning of the passage has been explained in the light of the controversies which divided the early Church on the function of the Jewish Law. St. Peter represented the happy mean between the traditionalism of St. James and the radicalism of St. Paul. His are the keys of the kingdom, because, as Canon Streeter puts it, his was 'that true insight into the nature of the righteousness taught by Christ, which is the indispensable qualification of one who is "to bind and to loose" (*i.e.* to expound the moral law) with such discrimination that what he shall "bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."' ¹ But it is not easy to interpret the passage in its immediate context. The genial, punning reference to Cephas as the *Cepha*, the rock, may well be original. From this wobbling disciple our Lord would make one firm as a rock. But the passage seems out of place in this context. In St. Mark's Gospel, St. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ is followed at once by the command to tell no man of Him, and by the

¹ *The Primitive Church*, p. 59.

prediction of His sufferings and death. Later we read of the disciples squabbling amongst themselves as to who should be the greatest in the Kingdom. If to Peter had been given the keys of the Kingdom and the right to bind and loose, such disputing is hard to explain, for to St. Peter pre-eminence would already have been assigned.

In view of such considerations, many scholars feel that we may not base upon these two passages the belief that Jesus in His lifetime founded a Church. However that may be, it seems quite clear that our Lord looked forward to the establishment of a Christian fellowship. The care He gave to the instruction of His disciples can best be understood if, from the beginning of His ministry, He foresaw that they would be left to continue His work after He Himself had gone. They were the little flock to whom it was the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. That Kingdom would not be for Jews alone. Strangers also would enter in. The Vineyard would be taken away from those who would not render to its Master their just dues. And the Last Supper seems itself to be a proof that our Lord looked forward to the disciples forming a fellowship, which should keep in remembrance His death.

It is this fellowship of which the early chapters of Acts speak. The reception of the Spirit's power led the first believers to continue "steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the

prayers.”¹ In spite of strife and sin, the unity of the fellowship was strongly realized, and that unity found expression in a common meal, and common worship.

It was this conception of the Church which St. Paul deepened and enriched. The very claim which Christians made to be the *ecclesia*, the Church, was itself a sign of their sense that they were not only the followers of Jesus, but “His *people*, the people of God,” and as such “the true Israel, at once the *new* people and the *old*.”² The Christians were a third people. For them the world was now divided into Jews and Gentiles, and the Church of God.³ The Jews had rejected the Messiah, and the Christians had now taken their place as heirs of the promises of God.

Insignificant as seemed the little local congregations, they, too, were Churches. In them was the Church, that Church in which the differences of slave and free-born, Jew and Gentile, male and female, had ceased to divide, for all were one in Christ Jesus. The Church was thus universal in its scope, its destiny and meaning. It was meant to be the Body of Christ on earth, whose members, drawing their nourishment from Christ the Head, should so grow up together that at last the Church should reveal in its corporate life the greatness of the Son of God.⁴ That was St. Paul’s ideal for the

¹ Acts ii. 42.

² Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, E.T.³, I, 240.

³ 1 Cor. x. 32.

⁴ Eph. iv. 13-16; cp. 1 Cor. xii. 12; Rom. xii. 4 f.

Church, and his most anxious care was given to make the actual more like the ideal.

The unity of the Church was thus keenly realized. Differences of opinion there were, but these differences did not bring isolation. St. Paul strove the harder to get help for the poor at Jerusalem, because they were the poor of the Church whose leaders were suspicious and unfriendly. For the unity of the Church he did not rely on organization, but on the impulse of Christian love. All gifts the Christians had were gifts of the Spirit to be used for the good of the Church. And among these gifts were gifts of government.¹

We find no evidence in St. Paul's writings for the "Catholic" theory of a threefold ministry. The term "Apostle" was not restricted to the Eleven or the Twelve. St. Paul's own authority was not that of office. It was the authority of the pioneer-missionary who stands to his converts as a "father to the children he has begotten."² Thus Paul did not himself expel the incestuous member from the Corinthian Church. That excommunication was to be the act of the whole assembly of its members.³

There is no evidence in the New Testament that uniformity of organization was held to be essential, or even important. From the first, Churches differed in their mode of government. We read of overseers (*bishops*), elders (*presbyters*) and deacons, but it is an anachronism to suppose that there was already

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 28-31; cp. Eph. iv. 11 ff.

² 1 Cor. iv. 15.

³ 1 Cor. v. 3 ff.

a threefold ministry. Overseers and elders—the words “bishop” and “presbyter” are used of the same persons—were leading members of the local churches, but nowhere are we told that theirs was a whole-time office. All Christians were meant “to exhort each other, and to build each other up.”¹ The differences were differences, not of status, but of type of gift. The Church needed no special “priests,” for all alike were priests. As Bishop Lightfoot said, “The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood.”²

The fellowship of Christians with Christ, and with each other, found expression in the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Both these Sacraments go back to the very beginnings of the Christian Church, and were believed to have been founded by our Lord Himself.

For our Lord’s institution of the rite of Baptism, we have in the Synoptic Gospels no certain evidence. Ablution is a natural symbol of cleansing. The Jews baptized a proselyte after his circumcision. John the Baptist had baptized Jews in preparation for the Messiah’s coming. The Book of Acts tells us that when our Lord spoke of “the promise of the Father,” the gift of the Spirit’s power, He spoke also of a baptism with the Holy Spirit.³ St.

¹ 1 Thess. v. 11 ff.

² *Essay on The Christian Ministry* (Comm. on Philipians, 1900 edn., p. 185).

³ Acts i. 4 f.

Matthew's Gospel terminates with the command of the risen Christ that His followers should make disciples among all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. The use of the threefold name may be due to later tradition,¹ but the unquestioned acceptance of Baptism in the early Church is most simply explained by the assumption that its use was enjoined by our Lord, before or after the Resurrection.

For the ideas connected with Baptism in the early Church we have once more to turn to the Epistles of St. Paul. These Epistles were addressed to missionary Churches, and in missionary Churches baptism is of decisive importance. It is more than a symbol ; it is an act which marks the definite breach with paganism and the entrance into the Christian Society. Baptism is thus a fit emblem for the Christian's death to sin, and his participation in a life so different from the old that it can be compared to Christ's resurrection from the dead.² In Acts and in the Epistles we have references to the baptism of whole households, and since it is hard to believe that all these households were childless, it seems probable that children also were baptized.³ But the typical baptism in a missionary Church is the baptism of an adult convert from paganism, and it is this which gives to the act its radical significance in New Testament times.

¹ In the New Testament, baptism is normally in or into the name of Christ.

² Cp. Rom. vi. 1-19 ; Gal. iii. 26 f.

³ Acts x. 48 ; xvi. 15 ; xvi. 33 ; 1 Cor. i. 16 and xvi. 15.

By some modern scholars the importance assigned to baptism by St. Paul is explained, not by the missionary nature of his work, but by the influence of pagan "mysteries." The evidence for the mystery-cults in St. Paul's age and place is very slight. Modern missionary experience suggests that St. Paul's converts from paganism would be likely to interpret the Christian rites in a partly pagan way, and of this the Corinthian custom of baptizing on behalf of the dead may be an instance. But that St. Paul himself regarded baptism as in itself a source of salvation seems quite improbable. For him faith was the prime response to God's saving grace, and of this faith Baptism was the solemn expression.

Nor is it necessary to assign St. Paul's interpretation of the Lord's Supper to pagan influence. The evidence for the existence in St. Paul's time of sacramental meals in connexion with the mystery-cults is altogether lacking.¹ Innovations in ritual are speedily discerned, but there is no indication that even the bitterest of the Judaizers accused St. Paul of innovation here. That fact alone makes improbable the view that the Lord's Supper as a commemorative feast owes its origin to his teaching.

But if, as seems clear, the Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord on the night of His betrayal,

¹ As even Reitzenstein now admits, *Die Hellenistischen-Mysterienreligionen*, p. 81. The evidence for these supposed pagan sacraments is given briefly in the writer's *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 272-8, whilst Paul's teaching on this is described in pp. 216-36.

then it must have had a meaning intelligible at that time. The Synoptic Gospels in part imply that the first Lord's Supper was a Paschal meal. It seems more likely that in this St. John's Gospel has preserved the true tradition, so that our Lord's betrayal took place the night before the Passover. St. Luke tells us that, as He sat down to His last meal with the Apostles, Jesus said, "With desire I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."¹ That could not be, for when the Passover was eaten, He would be already dead. As he could not eat the Passover with them that year, He gave to that last meal a Paschal meaning. The Passover was the sacred meal which commemorated God's covenant with His people. The meal of which they partook was the meal of the New Covenant. Instead of the Paschal lamb, our Lord gave them bread, saying, "This is my body," and, as He gave the wine He said, "This is my blood of the Covenant."² Of an actual eating of His flesh and blood He could not have spoken, for He was yet alive. But bread and wine stood as symbols for His body which would be broken, and His blood which would be shed for many.

St. Paul, in his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, speaks, not as one giving new teaching, but as one reminding his hearers of the common tradition of the Christian Church. Our Lord had bidden His disciples eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Him. St. Paul's solemn

¹ Luke xxii. 15.

² Mark xiv. 22 ff.

warning to those who ate and drank unworthily seems to imply his belief in the Real Presence of Christ at His table. By their act they were rejecting Him, whilst He was present before them, and thus they were sharing in the guilt of those that had Him crucified. In the sickness and death of some at Corinth he saw the effect of "not discerning the Lord's body."¹ If alien influence is to be suspected, it is the influence, not of pagan ideas of the perils which beset the eating of consecrated food, but the influence of the Jewish theory of retribution which saw in calamity the direct punishment of evil.

In his other reference to the Lord's Supper, St. Paul speaks of "the cup of blessing which we bless" as "the communion of the blood of Christ"; "the bread which we break" as "the communion of the body of Christ." The words occur in the context of his condemnation of Christians who attended idolatrous feasts. Elsewhere he had declared that idols are nothing. Yet he believed, as Christians, for instance, in mass-movement Churches in South India believe to-day, that to go where idols are worshipped is to go where demons are; so that to share in an idolatrous feast was to have communion with demons. So far from saying that those who shared in pagan feasts ate the flesh and drank the blood of demons, he affirms that the thing sacrificed

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 20-34. The "not discerning the Lord's body" of verse 29 seems to mean "not recognizing the obligation of the Fellowship which is Christ's body," so that some ate and drank to excess whilst others were hungry.

is nothing. We cannot, therefore, take his words to mean that the wine and bread of the Lord's Supper become, in any sense, the blood and body of Christ. Participation in the blood of Christ is rather the memory, and more than the memory—the realization of the meaning of Christ's death. And the communion of the body of Christ may mean either incorporation into Christ or participation in the Christian Fellowship. "We who are many are one loaf, one body."¹

In St. John's Gospel there is no mention of the institution of the Lord's Supper at our Lord's last meal with His disciples. Instead, we have the acted parable of humility, the washing by our Lord of His disciples' feet. That may have been because the Evangelist judged that the institution of the Lord's Supper was too well known to need recording. It is more probable that the omission is deliberate. As Professor Kennett says, "He has put a Sacrament of Service in place of the Sacrament of the Bread and the Wine. At the same time he has shown his familiarity with the latter; for in his account of the discourse at Capernaum (St. John vi.) he has put into our Lord's mouth phraseology which can scarcely have arisen except from the Holy Communion. It may be that when the Fourth Gospel took shape, a tendency was manifest to regard the Holy Communion as of the same nature as a pagan 'mystery,' and that the author deliberately transferred the language to an occasion when

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16-21.

literal eating and drinking were not to be thought of.”¹

The New Testament thus depicts a Church in the pioneer stage of missionary activity. Its unity was strongly realized. It would have been unthinkable to St. Paul that a man should be a Christian, and yet live in isolation from the Church. But that unity did not depend on uniformity of organization, but on the common possession of the Spirit, and on the common proclamation of Jesus as Lord, and of His death and resurrection as the centre of the Christian Gospel. There was the one Church, the new Israel of God, and yet the local congregations also were called Churches, for in them the Church was manifest. Different Churches were organized in different ways, yet they were not independent of each other, for all were bound together by that love in which the Spirit's power was most clearly shown. All the members of the Church were “priests.” Gifts of government were regarded only as some of the many gifts which the Spirit gave; and, like all other gifts, were to be used for the upbuilding of the Church. Baptism was the sign of membership of this sacred fellowship; the Lord's Supper was the solemn commemoration of Christ's death. Christ was conceived as present at His table, and those that gathered there renewed their sense of the meaning of His death; they experienced anew their participation

¹ *The Last Supper*, p. 45.

in Him, and so their part in the fellowship of all believers.

Of the development of those conceptions of the Church and the Ministry which still divide us it is impossible to speak here with any adequacy.

The death of the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, increasing persecution, the rise of Gnosticism, and the complete transition of Christianity from a Jewish to a Græco-Oriental setting, led to the gravest perils of anarchy and dissolution. By the end of the second century that crisis had been in part surmounted by the formation of a threefold authority—the Canon of the New Testament, the Rule of Faith, and the Episcopate—as a means of securing stability and unity. As the Bishop of Gloucester puts it, “Gradually as the Apostles passed away, and the missionary element in the Church declined in usefulness and prestige and influence, the local ministry would rise in importance, and, in particular, its chairman would become the representative of the community to those without. Gradually, by a process which was quite natural, but cannot be traced, the name *episcopus*, or bishop, which had been formerly shared by all presbyters, would be specialized, just as was the case with the name deacon, which was at first used of all Christian ministers.”¹ In the confusion of

¹ *The Doctrine of the Church and Reunion*, pp. 98 f. As Dr. Headlam says, “for the first 200 years of Christianity we have little evidence.” Dr. Gore, *e.g.*, states, “there is not in the whole range of ecclesiastical history from A.D. 150, say down to 1520, any instance which can be made

the time, the "bishops," and especially those "bishops" who were the chief pastors of the historic Churches, provided a useful element of stability, for they could claim that the Christianity which they taught was the same as that of the founders of the Churches to whom they stood in succession. But it was continuity of doctrine, not transmission of grace, that was at issue. As some of the greatest of Anglican scholars have reminded us, "Till late in the second century, appeal to the fact of episcopal successions" was "cited not as a witness to the transmission of grace, but to continuous teaching of the same doctrine of Christ."¹

Not until Cyprian² do we find a developed theory of the monarchical episcopate. For Cyprian each bishop was supreme in his own see. The Church was constituted by the bishops, and only by submission to the Church thus constituted could salvation be obtained. Instead of the priesthood of all believers, there is now the restriction of the priesthood to one section of the Church. The bishop is supremely God's priest; in a secondary sense, the presbyters share in his sacerdotal dignity.

To Cyprian only the orders and sacraments of the one "Catholic" Church were valid. That

good of the acceptance by the Church of an ordination by a presbyter or a congregation." But this, as Dr. Headlam says, "may be also put in quite a different way." "There is no evidence at all for ordination by a bishop till the third century," *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

¹ From the manifesto published in *The Times* of March 18th, 1930.

² Bishop of Carthage A.D. 248-58.

view was modified by Augustine, whose theory became of decisive importance. His theory was evolved to suit the needs of his controversy with the Donatists. The Donatists had left the Catholic Church because of what they deemed its undue tolerance of those who had evaded martyrdom. It was their custom to rebaptize Catholics who joined them. Augustine, on the other hand, did not rebaptize Donatists who repented of their schism. He thus needed a theory of the sacraments which would show at once that the Donatists were wrong in rebaptizing, and that the Catholic Church was the sole dispenser of salvation. He found the theory which he needed in the teaching of the "indelible" nature of the sacraments. Thus he compares the sacrament of baptism to the mark a conscript received on joining the army. If later he deserted from the army, that mark was not given him again when he was brought back to its service.¹ "Men may be baptized in communions severed from the Church," but "it will only then be of avail for the remission of sins, when the recipient, being reconciled to the unity of the Church, is purged from the sacrilege of deceit by which his sins were retained, and their remission prevented."² In this way he could teach that men may, indeed, receive "the Church's baptism, outside her pale, but that no one outside can either receive or retain the salvation of eternal happiness."³ St. Paul had made unity depend on love; Augustine made love depend on

¹ *On Baptism*, I, iv.

² *Op. cit.*, I, xii.

³ *Op. cit.*, IV, i.

unity. Baptism and orders were efficacious only within the Church, for the Church—in the sense of the organized Catholic community—alone has that love which is the bond of unity. Yet, at the same time, there was no need for rebaptism or reordination.

It is impossible to reconcile Augustine's teaching on grace as God's free gift with his teaching on grace as something infused through sacraments. It was this teaching on the infusion of grace which the Medieval Church was to emphasize. Since none could be saved except through that "love" which comes from the unity possessed by the Catholic Church alone, persecution could be regarded as one of the means by which men might be saved. Augustine shrank himself from demanding the death penalty, but he came to urge the compulsion by force even of "schismatics" who were not "heretics." Did not Christ say, "Compel them to come in?" and did not St. Paul teach, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, not being weary in well-doing," and such good may be done by "the edicts of Catholic princes" as well as by "the sermons of Catholic preachers."¹ Thus the love of which he speaks is not Christian love, nor even common human kindness. It is that ecclesiastical "love" which later led to the horrors of the Inquisition.

¹ *The Correction of the Donatists* (an Epistle addressed to Count Boniface), vi and ii, quoting Luke xiv. 23 and Gal. vi. 9 f.

In spite of sporadic attempts to secure reforms by a General Council, in the Middle Ages the authority of the Church came increasingly to mean the authority of the Pope at Rome. Thus Boniface VIII could declare that it was "for every human being altogether necessary for salvation that he should be in obedience to the Roman pontiff."¹ And this assertion of the power of the Pope has in modern times reached its extreme conclusion in the promulgation by the Vatican Council of 1870 of the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope when pronouncing *ex cathedra* on questions of faith and morals.

The Reformation had its beginning not in a new conception of the Church, but in Luther's rediscovery of saving faith in the God revealed in Christ. When in 1517 he made his famous protest against the hawking of indulgences, he did so as a loyal son of the Church, desiring that error should be stayed, but neither expecting, nor desiring, a breach with Rome. It was his debate with Eck in 1519 which first made him see the fundamental difference between his conception of salvation by faith in the grace of God revealed in Christ, and the Roman conception of salvation, earned by works, or obtained by the favour of the Church from the accumulated and marketable merits of the saints. This difference he expressed in the three great *Primary Treatises* published in the following year—the year in which he received and burnt the Papal Bull of

¹ Bull *Unam Sanctam* of 1302.

excommunication. "Between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, or as they call it, between spiritual and secular persons, the only real difference is one of office and work, and not of estate."¹ Hence he refused to recognize the Sacrament of Orders. "All we who are Christians are priests; those whom we call priests are ministers chosen from among us to do all things in our name."²

This re-emphasis on the priesthood of all believers led to a new conception of the Church. Greatest of all the means of grace was now the Word, the proclamation of the saving grace of God in Christ, and the Church was understood as "the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered."³ Provided the Word could be preached and the sacraments administered, Luther had little interest in the Church's organization, and, in the end, and partly through his influence, the Lutheran Churches fell unduly under the dominance of the secular power.

To Calvin the Church was at once invisible and visible. In the invisible Church were numbered not only the elect on earth, but also those who have departed this life. The unity of the Church lay in the relation of its members to Christ, its head. No

¹ *To the Christian Nobility* (Luther's *Primary Works*, E.T.³, by Wace and Buchheim, p. 166).

² *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

³ *The Confession of Augsburg*, article 7. The words are Melancthon's, but the thought is Luther's. The next article admits that although the Church is *properly* the congregation of saints and true believers, "in this life many hypocrites and evil men are conjoined to it."

Catholic theologian prized the visible Church more highly than did Calvin. "To those to whom God is a Father, the Church must also be a mother." The Church is God's gift to our human frailty. It is by the preaching of her ministers and by the sacraments that God fosters and confirms our faith. "Wherever we see the Word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, then we cannot doubt that the Church of God has some existence, since His promise cannot fail, Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."¹

Baptism.—The rite of baptism was soon identified with the forgiveness which it symbolized. Thus Augustine speaks of it as "the bath of regeneration whereby all sins are forgiven," and teaches that infants dying unbaptized will be damned, although, since their sins are less, with "a more tolerable damnation."² Since baptism and the forgiveness of sins were thus identified, even when infant baptism became normal, baptism was often postponed that so the sins of youth might get forgiveness. Thus, for all the piety of his mother, Augustine himself received baptism only in his mature manhood. Christ's death availed for prebaptismal sins; sins committed after baptism had to be atoned for by penance.³

¹ *Institutes* (of 1559) iv. i. 1, 4, 9.

² *Enchiridion*, § 9.

³ See earlier, p. 164, for Thomas Aquinas's teaching here.

At the Reformation it was not easy to relate the baptism of infants to Luther's teaching of salvation by faith, and it is not surprising that the Anabaptists condemned infant baptism as "meaningless magic." Luther retained infant baptism, but his varying explanations of it reveal his perplexity, and in the end he fell back on the command to baptize of Matt. xxviii, and on Christ's blessing of the children in Mark x. 14.

It might be thought that Calvin, with his strong emphasis on predestination, would require that baptism should be postponed until a time when the signs of election could be detected. Instead, in spite of his teaching on election, he vigorously attacked the Anabaptist view. As circumcision was intended for infants, so is baptism. "Baptism is a kind of entrance, and, as it were, an initiation into the Church." It is a sign that "our heavenly Father" "acts towards us as a most provident parent, not ceasing to care for us even after our death, but consulting and providing for our children." "Wherefore," he concludes, "if we would not maliciously obscure the kindness of God, let us present to Him our infants, to whom He has assigned a place among His friends and family, that is, the members of the Church."¹

The Lord's Supper.—Views approximating to the four most influential theories of the Lord's Supper are to be found in the writers of the first few Christian centuries. Here it is only

¹ *Institutes* (of 1559), iv, xvi, 30 and 32.

possible to speak of the classic formulations of these theories.

(1) The theory of transubstantiation, which is now the official theory of the Roman Church, is thus defined by the Council of Trent. "By the consecration of the bread and wine a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. And this conversion is fittingly and properly called by the holy Catholic Church transubstantiation."¹ In this the Council of Trent was reiterating in slightly different language the definition of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. At a time when God seemed remote from men, Christian devotion naturally found comfort in the thought that Christ was actually present in the consecrated elements. And that presence was often asserted with gross realism, as if the body of Christ was held in the hands of the priests, and broken by the teeth of those who received the consecrated bread.² By distinguishing between substance and accidents, the medieval theologians were able to preserve the view of popular piety, that, after their consecration by the priest, the bread and wine became

¹ Session XIII of October 11th, 1551. The text is given in Mirbt, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums*⁴, p. 307.

² Thus Berengar, who had taught a more spiritual view, had in his retraction to the Synod of Rome of A.D. 1059 to assert "that the bread and wine which are placed on the altar, after consecration were not only a sacrament but the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ *et sensualiter, non solum in sacramento, sed in veritate manibus sacerdotum tractari et frangi et fidelium dentibus atteri.*"

the body and blood of Christ, and yet to make this view less vulnerable, because more mysterious. The *substance* of the bread and wine were at the consecration of the elements by the priest transmuted into the body and blood of Christ, but the *accidents* of bread and wine remained unchanged, and so the miracle of the altar was removed from human scrutiny.

(2) The theory of consubstantiation teaches, in the words of Luther's *Larger Catechism*, that "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" is "in and under the bread and wine, through Christ's Word appointed for us Christians to eat and drink."¹ This theory is commonly associated with Luther's name. It was not, however, his invention, but part of his heritage from the school of theology in which he had been trained. The doctrine of transubstantiation he rejected, not only because he did not accept the Aristotelian philosophy from which the distinction between "substance" and "accidents" was derived,² but because it made the presence of Christ dependent on the consecration prayer which could be uttered only by a priest. In this way the Sacrament became the work of man. To Luther its blessing depended solely on the divine Act, by which Christ fulfils His promise to give Himself to men. As we have seen, Luther strongly emphasized the unity of the divine and the human in the person of Christ, and by his use of the

¹ *Primary Works, etc.*, E.T.², p. 144.

² Cp. *The Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, *op. cit.*, pp. 310 ff.

theory of the "communication of attributes" could teach that, as the divine nature received the attributes of the human, the human received the attributes of the divine. Thus the body of Christ had received the divine attribute of "ubiquity," and, being everywhere, could be regarded as received by the communicant in, with, and under the elements. The theory enabled Luther, while avoiding what he regarded as the errors of the doctrine of transubstantiation, to express his religious conviction of the real impartation of Christ to those that gather at His table, but as an explanation it seems not unintelligible only, but incredible.

(3) The interpretation of the Lord's Supper as a memorial-feast was revived by Zwingli¹ in his disputation with Luther. In this phase of his teaching the Supper was primarily a memorial of the redemption won through the death of Christ, a confession of Christ before the Church, and a rededication to the Christian life. As he protested in his dispute with Luther, the "is" of the words of institution means "signifies."

(4) The view of Calvin sought to assert the true presence of Christ at His table, and yet to give an explanation, at once more intelligible, and more congruous with the Reformation understanding of

¹ He had earlier taught the real, though spiritual, reception by the communicant of Christ. At his conference with Luther at Marburg, discussion turned largely on the "ubiquity" of Christ's body, Zwingli arguing that Christ's body, being in heaven, could not be omnipresent. For the recent German controversy on the nature of Zwingli's earlier views see Mackinnon, *Luther and the Reformation*, iii, 313 ff.

Christianity. A sacrament to Calvin was a "testimony of the divine favour toward us, confirmed by an external sign, with a corresponding attestation of our faith toward Him." "The office of the sacraments differs not from the word of God; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and in Him, the treasures of heavenly grace."¹ Rejecting both the Catholic and the Lutheran theories, Calvin yet held that Christ truly gives Himself at the communion to those that believe in Him. "The Lord was pleased by calling Himself the bread of life, not only to teach that our salvation is treasured up in the faith of His death and resurrection, but also, by true communication with Him, His life passes into us, and becomes ours, just as bread when taken for food gives vigour to the body." "He declares that His flesh is the meat, His blood the drink of my soul; I give my soul to Him to be fed with such food. In His sacred Supper He bids me take, eat and drink His body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I have no doubt that He will truly give and I receive."² The Sacrament is thus brought into connexion with the work of the Spirit and with the Word. The feast is more than a feast of commemoration, for Christ is present, and gives Himself to those that truly believe in Him.

The present divisions of the Christian Church have their origin in the circumstances of the past, and between many of them there is now no essential

¹ *Institutes* (of 1559), iv, xiv, 1, 17. ² *Op. cit.*, iv, xvii, 5, 32.

difference. Thus in England Congregationalists and Presbyterians form separate bodies. In Canada, and many parts of the mission field, they are united, not from compromise, but by that true union in which each has gained from the contribution of the other. Most of the great non-Episcopal bodies of Britain and America realize their essential unity, recognize each other's orders, and can join together at the table of the Lord. The gulf which as yet cannot be bridged is that which separates what are commonly called the "Catholic" and the "Evangelical" sections of the Church.¹

According to the Roman Catholic theory, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is that visible Church, which gives obedience to the Pope as Christ's Vicar on earth. It alone is the arbiter of Christian truth, and the dispenser of the sacraments which are indispensable to salvation. We have a modified form of this theory in the view of some Anglo-Catholics, who, while refusing to recognize the supremacy of the Pope, teach that the sacraments of the Church can only rightly be administered by those who have been ordained by bishops, whose grace to ordain is derived from their supposed unbroken succession from the Apostles.²

¹ I use these words for convenience' sake, realizing how misleading they are. "Catholics," whether Roman or Anglican, are "Evangelical," for they, too, profess the Gospel; "Evangelicals" are "Catholic," for they also belong to the one Catholic Church of Christ, and are, indeed, more catholic than "Catholics," for they do not unchurch even those who unchurch them.

² Thus Dr. Gore, in his *Roman Catholic Claims*, bases the validity of Anglican orders primarily on the validity of the consecration of Matthew Parker as Archbishop in 1559.

These tremendous theories seem to lack support in history. In the words of two Anglican scholars, "No particular theory of the Church and no form of Church government can find any support, direct or indirect, in the teaching of our Lord," whilst "the New Testament contains no directions at all from the Apostles about the Christian ministry."¹ "At the end of the first century A.D., there existed, in different provinces of the Roman Empire, different systems of Church government. Among these, the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, and the Independent can each discover the prototype of the system to which he himself adheres."² In so far as the Roman and Anglo-Catholic theories claim to be based on the New Testament and primitive tradition, these claims can be tested by historical research, and by these tests the claims have been disproved. But the issue between the "Catholic" and the "Evangelical" conceptions of the Church is too fundamental to be solved by the researches of scholars. These theories are the correlates of two different apprehensions of the nature of God's grace, and the working of His Spirit.

Some of us who hold the Evangelical conception of the Church would no longer claim the authority of Christ or of the Apostles for the particular form of Church government obtaining in the section of the Church to which we ourselves belong. What we do claim is this: that so far as we can understand

¹ A. C. Headlam, *The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion*, pp. 45 and xix.

² B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, p. ix.

the New Testament, the Church is constituted, not by apostolic orders, but by its Gospel. The Church exists for the Gospel, and consists of all of those in whom the Gospel's saving power is operative.

Thus we, too, believe, in the words of the so-called "Nicene" Creed, in "one holy, catholic and apostolic Church." The Church is one, since Christ is one; it is holy, since in it the Holy Spirit works; it is catholic, for it embraces men and women of every type and clime; it is apostolic, for from the very beginnings of Christianity there has been the Christian Church. And in this conception of the Church, some would include not only all the faithful on earth, but that greater number, the faithful who have already passed over into the unseen.

Since the Church is one in Christ, its members are meant to form one fellowship. Unity in Him means unity with each other. Those who are "in Christ" are inextricably bound together. Those who know God as Father have all His children as their brethren. To experience the Spirit's power is to have that love which seeks the good of all. And so we dare not unchurch any Church, nor refuse to recognize as Christ's any Christian man or woman, or any Christian society however organized.

Thus, from this point of view, there already exists a unity of the Church, even although there is not as yet that kind of corporate union which would

secure uniformity of organization. Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism are forms of government which alike have proved their usefulness, and have their distinctive gifts to offer to a reunited Church. But forms of government are of subsidiary importance. A Church should use, but it is not made by, what it deems the best form of organization. A "Union of the Churches" would not make the Church one, for it is already that. But it might make the Church more effective by its practical assertion of the fellowship of all believers, and by its demonstration to the world of this unity which it already has in Christ.

The Reformers, as we have seen, saw the signs of the visible Church in the right preaching of the Word, and in the due administration of the Sacraments. We dare not make even these two signs an exclusive test, for that would be to unchurch the Society of Friends, whose members show that they truly belong to Christ. Yet we see in these two signs the normal marks of the Church, and its most precious treasures. The Word of the Gospel, the *kerugma*, is at once the Church's best possession, and its solemn trust. Since that Word is God's saving Word to men, it is a Word which is brought to men by speech as well as writing. The Bible contains God's Word, but the Word in the Bible has to be conveyed by the speech of living men. Thus the preaching of the Word is central in the Church's worship. True preaching is more than human speech. In it God's Word is uttered anew, and

Christ once more proclaimed to men. The mother with her children, the teacher with the Sunday-school class, may thus be used to utter anew God's Word. But the proclamation of God's Word reaches its most typical expression when, at the assembly of public worship, the preacher proclaims to the Church, and on the Church's behalf, that Gospel which is new as well as old. It is part of God's mercy to His church that in every age He calls men for this service. The ministry is thus not of man's appointment. The Church has, as best it may, to test the reality of the divine call, and to provide for the adequate training of those who are to be set apart for this hard and sacred task. But the authorization of men is not in itself sufficient for a true ordination. Such authorization, by whomsoever made, is a ratification, not an origination, of God's choice and call. The New Testament, as we have seen, knows nothing of a special priestly class, for the whole Church is priestly. Nor is the preacher's task his alone. All Christians are meant to have their share in passing on this Good News of God. The minister is representative. He is set aside that, freed from other work, he may do for the Church what is the Church's task, and, by preaching and by pastoral care, be the ambassador on behalf of Christ, serving the Church by fulfilling that ministry of reconciliation which has been entrusted to all believing men and women.

The Sacraments stand in close connexion with the Word. They are the Word made visible,

and, like the Word, are God's gift to the Church.

As we have seen, in the New Testament, baptism is described in the context of the pioneer stage of missionary activity. In consequence, it was typically, though probably not exclusively, the baptism of adults. For such, as with converts from paganism to-day, baptism was as decisive an act as are the giving and the receiving of the ring and the clasping of hands in Christian marriage. Baptism meant the final breach with pagan life and pagan ways, and the incorporation into Christ, and so into the Christian fellowship. Baptism did not originate the new life in its recipient. That new life was begun by faith; and baptism was not creative of faith, it was faith's solemn and visible expression.

Where baptism is the baptism of infants, it is impossible to speak of the faith of its recipient. Since there can be no regeneration without faith, and since baptism has been connected with regeneration, Baptists refuse to baptize infants, and confine the rite to adults, for whom it can be the symbol of conversion. But the child of Christian parents has its place in the Church. Once again, we may learn from missionary experience, where contrasts are more marked than in nominally Christian lands. Deeply significant as is the baptism of adult converts from paganism, no less significant is the baptism of their children. Had their parents not become Christians, they would have been brought up, if,

for example, outcastes of South India, in ignorance of Christ, to live in fear of demons. As the children of Christians, they are born into the heritage of the Gospel. They grow up within the Christian Church. And in the growing paganism of our so-called Christian lands the difference of status between the child of Christian parents and the child of non-Christians is here also becoming clear. The Christian parents bring their child to the Church, grateful that God's promises of mercy are available for it. The Church in Christ's name receives the child. Thus there is a double obligation. The parents by their act declare that it is their intention to bring up the child within the sphere of the Christian Church. The Church by receiving the child in Christ's name incurs responsibility for its Christian nurture. And the congregation present is reminded of their parents' prayers and of God's prevenient grace which has been with them all through their lives. Baptism is the sacrament of God's Fatherhood. When in maturer years the baptized confess their faith in Christ, and enter into the full membership of the Church, they do so, not as strangers, but as those who from the first have experienced in its fellowship God's fatherly grace and care.

The Communion Service likewise is a proclamation of the Gospel. We dare not speak of Anglican or Free Church Communion tables. There is only one Table, and that the Lord's, and from that Table we may not exclude any who are His. It is

not the meal of a sect. It is the Supper of the Lord, and its meaning is given in its first institution. As we have seen, it was the meal of the new covenant of forgiveness. The broken bread and the out-poured wine are the symbols of the death whereby our Lord fulfilled His work for men. It is Christ's act, not man's, which gives the sacramental blessing, for the import of this service lies not so much in our commemoration of Christ as in Christ's bestowal of Himself on us. It is hard to watch unmoved the sacrifice of the Roman Mass, when the priest offers up to God the Host. But more solemn and more gracious is the meaning of the Communion Service, for in it it is not man that offers, it is Christ who gives Himself to men. The sacrament is thus primarily, not one of commemoration, but of communion. It is not of the past of which we chiefly think, but of the present. The Lord whose death we celebrate is present at His table, giving Himself anew to those that trust in Him. Thus the real Presence of Christ is not localized in the bread and wine. Christ is present in all the Service. He it is who gives and blesses.

Since the sacrament is a service of communion with Christ, it is a service also of communion with our fellow-Christians. In our unity with Christ, we know ourselves one with each other. And it is a Eucharist, a service of thanksgiving. With humble gratitude we remember our Lord's death, and, as He meets with us, and speaks to us of forgiveness and fresh power, we, receiving Him,

give thanks for the grace which has renewed us, and make to Him afresh the offering of our lives.

It is Christ's Church, Christ's Word, Christ's sacraments; and all alike exist to show forth the Gospel of God's saving grace in Him.

V

FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT

THE Christian Gospel speaks of the love of God, known through the grace of Christ and in the fellowship of the Spirit. God's saving word has come to men, not merely through the speech of prophets, but in personal form. And this self-manifestation of God in Christ is known to us, not as a fact of the past alone, but as a present experience. God is thus revealed in a threefold way, yet God is one.

It is these Christian facts which the doctrine of the Trinity seeks to express. There would be no doctrine of the Trinity were it not for the prior necessity of a doctrine of Christ's person, and there is a doctrine of Christ's person, because Christian faith has seen in Christ, not its example only, but its object. The doctrine of the Trinity is thus not a primary assertion of Christian faith, but a hypothesis necessary to express the threefold manifestation of the one God.

Much confusion has arisen through the attempt to treat the doctrine of the Trinity, not as an intellectual explanation, but as an article of saving faith. Thus the so-called "Athanasian" Creed declares that, "Whosoever will be saved : before all things it is necessary to hold the Catholic Faith, which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled,

without doubt he shall perish everlastingly," and then proceeds to state that Faith as a doctrine of the Trinity, expressed in terms which even trained theologians find hard to understand. Where faith is interpreted as assent to the authority of the Church, such a claim is at least intelligible. But it is a claim which ought not to be made by those who as Protestants profess to accept the New Testament conception of faith as response to the grace of God in Christ.

The doctrine of the Trinity can no longer be regarded as a primary truth of the Gospel, and in most modern Protestant theologies it is treated, not as an immediate affirmation of faith, but as an ultimate intellectual implicate. Barth, indeed, has recently sought to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of theology, and begins his statement of theology with an exposition of this doctrine.¹ Such an approach gives to this doctrine an undue prominence. As Brunner, the chief theologian of the Barthian school, says, "The doctrine of the Trinity is a theological doctrine; it is not the Biblical *kerugma*.² It should not be preached. It is a defensive doctrine which would, indeed, not be necessary if the two fundamental statements of the Christian confession were allowed to stand: God alone can help, and Christ alone is this divine help."³

¹ *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, pp. 126 ff.

² *I.e.* the content of preaching, the preaching-message. It is the word used by Paul in 1 Cor. 21.

³ *Der Mittler*, pp. 243 f.

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is thus an intellectual construction which in any of its classic forms owes much to secular philosophy, it has its roots, not in otiose speculation, but in the continuous faith and experience of the Church.

As we have seen, our Lord spoke chiefly, not of Himself, but of God and of God's Kingdom. Yet He so preached God and God's purposes as to show that He Himself belonged to the message He proclaimed. The authors of Acts and St. Paul and St. John alike bear witness that He spoke of the promise of the Spirit. For St. Paul, the distinctive Christian confession was this: that Jesus is Lord and this confession was associated with the possession of the Spirit, and with a confident trust that God was Father. His experience of God was thus conceived in a threefold way. He was "adopted" into sonship with the Father; he was "in Christ"; he was "in the Spirit." Yet these three phases did not denote three different experiences, but three aspects of the same experience. To be "in Christ" and to be "in the Spirit" meant for him the possession of the same character and privileges. Christ was not for him "another God." Faith in Christ and faith in God were one. Christ was the image of the Father, whilst the supreme sign of the possession of the Spirit was to be found in the reproduction of the love of Christ.¹

St. Paul speaks much of what the Spirit does, little of what the Spirit is, and yet, to use the terminology

¹ 1 Cor. xii. See earlier, p. 223.

of a later age, his monotheism was of a "trinitarian" type. The one God was not so much conceived as experienced in a threefold way. In this St. Paul was followed by later writers of the New Testament. Thus even one so theologically immature as the author of the Epistle of Jude, when he sought to get his readers to build themselves up in their "most holy faith," bade them pray in the Holy Spirit, and keep themselves in the love of God, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Whatever be the origin of the baptismal formula with which St. Matthew's Gospel ends, it is, at least, a witness to the early use of the threefold name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This belief finds full expression in the Gospel of St. John. The historic Christ is the eternal Word become flesh; the Spirit is the "other Paraclete," sent by the risen Christ to guide His followers into all truth.

Behind the "trinitarian" experience of the New Testament there lies the uncompromising monotheism of Judaism. It is significant that, amid all the diversities of opinion to be found in the New Testament, nowhere is there any indication that the Christians of Jewish stock and training felt that they had departed from the monotheism of their fathers. Still they believed in one God, but God had now for them a richer meaning, for He was known as the Father through the Son and in the Spirit.

As Christianity passed from a Jewish to a pagan environment, it was inevitable that its conception

¹ Vv. 20 f.

of God should be menaced, not only by pagan attacks, but by the misunderstandings of converts from paganism. The simple piety reflected in the Rule of Faith, embodied in our so-called Apostles' Creed, was content to confess belief in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit. That confession was not in itself sufficient to preserve the Christian message from the influence of polytheism. In paganism, then as now, there is the conception of a supreme God, a dim Absolute, in whom philosophers alone are interested, and the conception of gods who are the objects of popular devotion. The early thinkers of the Gentile Church, like many converts from paganism to-day, failed to Christianize their idea of God, and identified the supreme God with the God of pagan philosophy. It was Christ who aroused their active interest and who filled for them the place which had been occupied by the gods of paganism. In this way Christ was thought of as "a second God," and Christian monotheism became insecure.¹

The Arian controversy was thus, as we have seen, not an accident. It was the natural outcome of tendencies already existent in the Church. Arius's teaching was pagan in that it spoke of Christ as a creature who yet was to be worshipped. At the First Council of Nicæa, through the influence of Athanasius, that pagan view of Christ was rejected, and Christ declared to be consubstantial,

¹ Cp. earlier, p. 149.

"of one essence" (*homoousion*) with the Father. Later, against those who asserted that the Holy Spirit was a creature, it was declared that the Holy Spirit also was of the same essence as the Father. Thus the Eastern Church reached its formula of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three *hypostases* in one essence. By those who framed this formula in the East, the distinction of the *hypostases* was of primary importance.¹ The Father was the Unoriginated and the Source of Deity: the Son was the Generated and the Source of created existence; the Holy Spirit is He who proceeds from the Father. In this way a real triality was asserted, although, at the same time, the endeavour was made to preserve the unity of God, for Son and Holy Spirit are eternal, and of the same essence as the Father.

The Eastern formula "three *hypostases* in one essence" would, most naturally, have been rendered in the West, "three substances in one essence." But as the word "substance" (*substantia*) had already been used to translate essence (*ousia*), it could not be employed as a translation of *hypostasis*. Instead, we get the Latin formula "three persons in one

¹ The Cappadocian Fathers who were the leaders of the Younger Nicene party. For an illustration of their teaching see Gregory of Nazianzus' *Five Theological Orations*. The formula involved a change of vocabulary. The Council of Nicea had anathematized those who held that the Son was of another essence or *hypostasis* than the Father. Here the Son, though of one essence with the Father, is declared to be of a different *hypostasis* from the Father. On the meaning and history of the Trinitarian terminology see Webb, *God and Personality*, pp. 35-60, or Mr. Green's essay in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, edited by A. E. J. Rawlinson.

substance." The word "person" suggests to us personality. It has in this formula no such meaning. *Persona* denoted originally an actor's mask, and came to be used in the sense of aspect or rôle. We have only to turn to Augustine's elaborate treatise on *The Trinity* to realize how strongly in the West the unity of God was asserted. The analogies he uses to illustrate the Trinity are analogies like those of "memory, intelligence and will," or of "mind, the knowledge of mind, and the love wherewith a mind loves itself," where the unity is stronger than the difference. He does, indeed, speak of the lover, and that which is loved, and love.¹ From this analogy of love some modern writers have reached out to the idea of a "social" Trinity, a divine Society. Whatever be the value of this idea, it is not that of Augustine. The love of which he speaks is not love of another but of one's self. Since this analogy, like the other psychological analogies he uses, is drawn from the activities of a single self, it is the unity alone which is emphasized. Yet even Augustine realized at times the difficulty of illustrating the Trinity from a single personality. In the last book of his great Treatise he confesses that in this he had endeavoured more than he could accomplish. He "had, indeed, found in one person such as is a man, an image of that Highest Trinity," but "three things belonging to one person cannot suit those Three Persons."² And in one passage of this last

¹ *On the Trinity*, VIII, x.

² *Op. cit.*, XV, xxv.

book he speaks of Father, Son and Spirit having each a knowledge, memory and love of His own.¹ But in the main section of his book he so emphasizes the unity that it is only in the relation of the One to Another that he distinguishes between "the Father, the Son and the gift of both, the Holy Spirit."² This emphasis on the unity of the Godhead which characterizes the main argument of Augustine's treatise became normative for Western orthodoxy. It receives majestic expression in the opening section of the so-called "Athanasian" Creed, which became the third standard of orthodoxy in the West.³

At the Reformation this Western doctrine of the Trinity retained its authority. Luther had no liking for the term "Trinity." "Trinity and unity," he wrote, "are mathematical terms." As such he judged them to be unsuitable, but of the correctness of the Trinitarian formula he had no doubt. Calvin in the first edition of his *Institutes* likewise expressed reluctance to employ the "exotic" terms of the Creeds, although he recog-

¹ *Op. cit.*, XV, vii. "In that Trinity, who would dare to say that the Father understands neither Himself, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit, except by the Son, or loves them except by the Holy Spirit?" and so of memory and love. As Dr. Bicknell remarks, Augustine "gets more modalistic the further that he gets away from Scripture into the region of logic," *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 149.

² *Op. cit.*, VIII, Preface.

³ It was only in the West that the "Athanasian" Creed was thus regarded. The origin of this Creed is still uncertain. It existed in Gaul by the end of the sixth century. Its first section, which deals with the Trinity, bears a strong resemblance to the teaching of Augustine. It has been suggested that this first section is based on a hymn of Ambrose, written before Augustine's treatise.

nized that these terms had been used, not wantonly, but as a defence against the errors of heretics. But in the final edition of his great work he accepted the terms without reserve, and complained that "it is most uncandid to attack the terms which do no more than explain what the Scriptures declare and sanction." "Where names have not been invented rashly, we must beware lest we become chargeable with arrogance and rashness in rejecting them."¹

Although the Reformers thus accepted the orthodox formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, Luther's concentration on the one article of saving faith in Christ involved a change of emphasis which it has been left to modern theology to develop. In that great masterpiece of medieval theology the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, God's attributes are established by the natural reason, and even God's love is "proved" without reference to His gift of Christ. To the knowledge of God thus gained by the natural reason, revelation added the truth that God is triune. That surely is not the New Testament conception of our debt to Christ. He did not come to declare that God was triune; He came to proclaim, and in Himself show forth, God's holy and redeeming love. In the first great years of the Reformation especially it was this that Luther saw and taught. Revelation did not mean for him that through it we add to our knowledge of God already attained the knowledge of His mysteri-

¹ I, xiii, §§ 3, 5. Quotations are from Beveridge's translation.

ous triunity. It meant that in the Man Jesus, God was so known that in the love of the Son we may see and trust the Father's love.

Luther's intuition was for long obscured. Only in comparatively recent years has theology taken seriously its task of "recognizing God in Christ," and expelling from the thought of God ideas which conceal the prime Christian fact that God is known in Christ. As we have seen, the thinkers of the Eastern Church, by identifying the supreme God with the attributeless Absolute of pagan thought, were betrayed into the view that God could not feel or suffer; the thinkers of the Western Church, though formally asserting God's mercy, yet so emphasized His offended honour or His outraged justice as to obscure His love.¹ Thus from both East and West the Church has inherited ideas which make it impossible to recognize God in Christ. Christ's love has been clear; not so clear has been the love of God conceived of as impassible or minatory. And in the unthinking piety of the Church, the "persons" of the Godhead have been so distinguished that it is possible to read in a revivalist magazine of prayers for a sick child being offered in vain to God the Father and to God the Son, although, when offered to God the Holy Ghost, the child immediately was healed. Such views, even though they be the view of those who pride themselves on their orthodoxy, are not Christian, but pagan, for they introduce into the Godhead

¹ See earlier, chap. ii, pp. 74-9.

a dissimilarity of disposition and of will. No thought of God is truly Christian, if it fails to see in the Spirit the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and in the Father the God whose glory has been seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

In this there is increasing agreement among modern Christian thinkers. If, with classic Christian faith, we give to Christ a unique and final place, then we affirm that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, and that this revelation belongs, not to the past alone, but to the present. It is this which is expressed in the conception of God's threefold manifestation as Father, Son and Spirit. Our perplexities and divisions arise when we seek to pass from the Trinity of manifestation to the conception of a Trinity in God Himself.¹ Revelation and experience unite to give us the Trinity of manifestation. The conception of God as Himself triune is an ultimate implicate which lies beyond the range of our experience, and almost beyond the limits of our thought or speech.

This Trinity of manifestation is a distinctive element in Christianity. Triads are, indeed, common in the history of religion. Thus in Egyptian religion we have the Triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus, the father, the mother and the child, and in Hinduism we have the so-called Trinity (*trimūrti*) of Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva. But such triads provide no real parallel to the Christian conception. Thus

¹ In more technical language, from the "economic" to the "immanent" or "ontological" Trinity.

the Triad of Hinduism is "enumerative"; it has been formed by bringing together, in the interests of religious peace, three separate gods, and then assigning to each a distinct function. In Christianity we have, not the association of three gods, but the threefold manifestation of a God already recognized as One.¹

Although the Christian conception of God's threefold manifestation is thus unique, it stands in close relation to the general aspirations of religion, and brings into unity what elsewhere is separate. The words of St. Paul, "Of Him, through Him, unto Him," well sum up the meaning of the Christian threefold experience of God. Transcendence and Immanence are here combined, and these two aspects of God's working receive their personal character in the historic manifestation of Jesus Christ.² Islam emphasizes God's transcendence, Higher Hinduism, God's immanence. In Islam, the necessities of religion have led later Muslims to pass from the thought of Muhammad as God's prophet to the thought of Muhammad as God's self-revelation, whilst the Sūfīs have striven to emphasize God's immanence. In Hinduism, devotion centres on personal gods who are imperfectly related to the supreme deity. In Christianity alone are the three moments of Transcendence, Personal

¹ As Söderblom puts it, the Christian Triad is "reiterative," not "enumerative" (*Vater, Sohn und Geist*, p. 13).

² Rom. xi. 36; cp. Wobbermin, *Wesen und Wahrheit des Christentums* ² (*Systematische Theologie nach religionspsychologischer Methode*), iii, pp. 175 ff.

Character and Immanence perfectly united. The Creator-God is the God immanent within us who is known in His self-revelation in the Son.

Many would have us be content to affirm this Trinity of manifestation. That seems impossible. Thought inevitably asks, Is God in Himself what He reveals Himself to be? Is the Trinity of manifestation a revelation of a threefoldness in God Himself, and, if so, what is the nature of that threefoldness?

That is a problem of such immense difficulty that many prefer to accept without exploration the formulæ of the historic Creeds. Yet in two respects we seem compelled to advance beyond them.

(1) Harnack has characterized the dogma of the ancient Churches as being "in its conception and development" "the work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel."¹ That description is inadequate. It is truer to say that the dogma of the Trinity is a conception of the Christian spirit expressed in the categories of antiquity.² But those categories have lost for us their meaning. Since Christianity is a religion of personal communion with God, it finds to-day its most congenial philosophic expression, not in the category of substance, but in the category of personality.

(2) The doctrine of the Trinity has no meaning, and would not have been framed, were it not for

¹ *History of Dogma*, E.T., i. 17.

² Wobbermin, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

the prior doctrine of Christ's person. For those who see in Christ only the supreme religious genius of the race, there is no doctrine of Christ's person, and consequently no doctrine of the Trinity. Only as we see in Christ One divine are we compelled to relate His divinity to our belief in God. Since the doctrine of the Trinity is dependent on the doctrine of Christ's person, the two doctrines ought to be correlated. Paradox there must be in theology, but not clear contradiction. As we have seen, there are two great types of interpretation of Christ's person. One thinks of Him as the God-filled man, the other as the Son of God incarnate.¹ The first alone is compatible with the emphasis of Western orthodoxy on God's unity, the second requires an emphasis on God's real manifoldness. Yet, in general, Western orthodoxy has combined emphasis on God's unity with the incarnational interpretation of Christ's person. Thus the so-called "Athanasian" Creed in its first half so strongly asserts God's unity, that the three *personæ* are to be understood as three eternal aspects of the one Divine Being. Yet, in its second half, it asserts the Incarnation of our Lord, and, adopting the phraseology of the "Apostles'" Creed of popular piety, speaks of Christ as One who ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. If we so emphasize the unity or "simplicity" of the Godhead as to make of the *personæ* eternal aspects,

¹ Cp. earlier, pp. 183, 188.

we cannot speak of Incarnation, for an aspect cannot be thought of as becoming incarnate.

Beginning with the conception of God as Personal, some would have us conceive of Him with a simplicity which makes a doctrine of the Trinity unnecessary. In the historic Christ we have the revelation of the character of the eternal Spirit, immanent in the world and in men, and this eternal Spirit we may through Christ learn to trust as Father.¹ This view seeks to conserve the unique value of Christ, for it is from the historic life of Christ that it derives its conception of God's character, and, in this way, remains loyal to classic Christian faith. Yet the theory seems too simple for the facts.² More adequate as an interpretation of Christ as a God-filled man is Kähler's theory. Of his Christology we have already spoken. It has, as its correlate, a strong emphasis on the Unity of God, though from the consideration of God's self-manifestation in Christ and self-impartation in the Spirit, the threefoldness of this unity is asserted.

Attractive in many ways as is this interpretation of Christ as the God-filled man, the other interpretation of Him as the Son of God incarnate seems, as we have seen, more congenial to Christian faith. The best-loved hymns of ancient and of modern times alike think of Christ as the living Lord, and speak of His becoming man for our sake, and for our

¹ Cp. J. Baillie, *The Place of Christ in Modern Christianity*, pp. 185-95, and C. J. Cadoux's paper at The Cambridge Congregational Conference, published in *The Congregational Quarterly*, October 1929.

² See earlier, p. 211.

salvation, as the act of His own grace. The Communion Service, which is the Church's most grateful and solemn act of worship, and Christmas and Easter Day, its greatest festivals, would alike lose much of their significance if the idea of Christ as the incarnate Son were abandoned as a poetic symbol which Christian thought has now outgrown.

What matters in a theory is not simplicity, but adequacy to the facts. In science that is recognized. The interpretation of the physical universe by electrons and protons is certainly less simple and intelligible than that of the theory of atoms and molecules which it has displaced. It is accepted because it is held to be more adequate to the facts. And difficult as is the conception of a real triality in God, the type of interpretation which sees in Christ the Son of God incarnate seems more adequate to the facts of revelation and experience than the type of interpretation which sees in Him the God-filled man. And not only so, it seems to provide a more satisfying, if apparently less simple, view of God.

When we speak of God as personal, we do so because personality is the highest category that we know. He is the perfect personality which human personality imperfectly represents. It is true that with us personality is "a single centre of consciousness," and that "we know nothing of personality possessing three centres of consciousness."¹ But it is also true that personality is inconceivable in

¹ H. W. Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, p. 269.

isolation. Thought, will and feeling alike demand objects for their development. No man can live to himself alone. If it were possible for any man to be from infancy in complete isolation from his fellows, he would not attain even to such measure of personality as is within our human reach.

Difficult as it is for us to conceive of real distinctions in the Godhead, the denial of such distinctions seems to involve still greater difficulty. As Dr. Tennant reminds us, academic orthodoxy is "modalistic." But, as he adds, "The doctrine of the Trinity, however, when thus interpreted, offers no fresh contribution to theism. It possesses no unique philosophical import, and it can scarcely have any religious or devotional significance. This it only acquires when it is subconsciously interpreted, as probably it is by the religious user, tritheistically. If God is triune only in the sense in which any human being can be called a trinity, the fact seems insignificant both for theology and for practical religion."¹ We should prefer to speak of the interpretation of the Trinity given by "the religious user," not as Tritheism, but as that of triune Personality. We have no language adequate to express something for which our human life has no true analogy, but whether we speak, with Archbishop Temple, of "three Centres of one

¹ *Philosophical Theology*, ii, p. 268. Dr. Tennant adds, "The recent tendency of orthodox theologians to speak of God as 'a social being,' and to appropriate such philosophical advantages as the conception of a plural Deity would offer, involves an unconscious desertion of the Catholic faith."

Consciousness,"¹ or with Professor A. E. Taylor and Mr. Thornton of "three Centres of one Activity,"² we may find in the recognition of real distinctions in the personal unity of the Godhead the explanation of much that otherwise would be unintelligible. If we think of God as a simple and unitary Personality, then the central Christian conception of God as holy love seems insecure. Love must have an object, and if God existed in solitude, then love would not be essential to His being. But if within the personal unity of God, there be real distinctions, then the love of the Father can be interpreted as going out eternally to the eternal Son in the unity of the Spirit. Creation and redemption need no longer be conceived as arbitrary acts or processes, but as the external expression of the intra-personal love of God.³

¹ *Christus Veritas*, p. 117.

² *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 140. Mr. Thornton's view finds fuller expression in his book *The Incarnate Lord*, pp. 387-425.

³ Cp. St. Paul's cosmological speculations in 1 Cor. viii. 8, and Col. i. 14-17. The argument leads more clearly to the recognition of the twofold than to the threefold nature of God, and some would have us conceive of God in a binitarian rather than in a trinitarian way. On the whole subject see Dr. W. R. Matthews's discussion on the Holy Trinity in his book *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, published after this chapter was written. As he says, "At least there is some support in the New Testament and in the Christian consciousness for the belief that the Spirit is a divine Person, and the Catholic Church has decided that this doctrine is a part of the Christian faith." He adds, "To the present writer this last fact, though not finally decisive, is of very great moment. I should be very slow to recognize that, in a matter of this fundamental importance, the mind of the Church has been mistaken, and should prefer to hold, even if there were less to be said in support of the dogma than there is, that the inability to make the belief real to myself was due to defect of spiritual insight or understanding," *op. cit.*, p. 196.

As even Augustine realized at times, we cannot interpret the personality of God solely from the analogy of one single human personality, for that analogy obscures the real distinctions of God's personal life. Nor can we wisely speak, with many modern writers, of God as a Divine Society, for the analogy of a society inadequately expresses the unity of God. We need to include the truth which both these analogies imperfectly express. Personality as we know it in our human experience is developed by friendship and by love. Yet with us, even in the most perfect marriage or the most intimate friendship, there is always the individualization of time and space, whilst the purposes of two are never entirely one. In God there is no individualization of time and space ; in Him there is perfect identity of purpose and of will. The Gospel speaks to us, not of three Gods but of one God known in a threefold way. As He has revealed Himself, so we may believe Him to be : God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, unindividualized by time and space, perfectly one in character, purpose and in interpenetrating love.

VI

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

THE revelation of God in Christ and in the Spirit creates not only the present experience of faith, but a hope which reaches out beyond the grave. Without the Christian faith in God there may be a belief in immortality, but not the Christian hope. It is in relation to the Christian faith that the Christian hope alone has meaning.

Survival after death is not in itself something to hope for. In two of the great religions of the East—Hinduism and Buddhism—survival is generally regarded as an evil, and deliverance from the cycle of existence is the good most highly prized. In the West, desire for survival is more common, but that desire is often merely an expression of the instinct of self-preservation and lacks a rational basis. If in the present life men value only the things which are temporal, why should they desire a life that is eternal? Life beyond the grave has no true allurements unless among the things we prize are some which can survive death's dissolution.

"A God," wrote Sir William Hamilton, "is, indeed, to us only of practical interest inasmuch as He is the condition of our immortality."¹ That is an irreligious judgement. As Baron von Hügel

¹ *Lectures on Metaphysics*, i, 32.

wrote, "The central fact of religion is not survival, but God. I am almost not interested in survival, unless it means God. Survival must mean God, or it means nothing at all."¹ "After all," as Dr. Rainy said, "immortality is a dreary prospect if our Father is not in it."²

It is the ignoring of the connexion of the Christian hope with the Christian faith in God which accounts for much of the uncertainty about the future which besets many in Christendom to-day. There was a time when the future had too large a place in Christian preaching, and when the appeal of the Gospel was unduly concerned with the rewards and punishments of life beyond the grave. Hell's terrors and heaven's glories have alike ceased to impress those whose faith in God is weak. The doctrine of everlasting punishment is felt to be incompatible with the belief that God is just or loving, whilst heaven does not attract those who have not found in this life the joy of communion with the living God. And even the belief in immortality has waned, and many seek from spiritualism a confidence in survival beyond the grave which they have failed to gain from the Christian message.

Our Lord addressed His teaching to Jews who, for the most part, already believed in a future life. Prophecy had long since given place to apocalypse. This world-order was judged too evil to be saved.

¹ *Letters from Baron von Hügel to a Niece*, p. xxxii.

² *Life of Principal Rainy*, ii, p. 292, by P. Carnegie Simpson.

God would by His catastrophic act shatter this present age, and bring in a new age in which His people's faith would be vindicated, the righteous rewarded, and the evil punished for their deeds. The apocalyptic writings express this hope through bizarre symbols, which, differing much in detail, alike assert God's retributive justice.

We do not know to what extent the teachings of the apocalyptic writers were accepted by the Rabbis of our Lord's time, for the Rabbinic texts, in their present form, date from a period in which the apocalyptic hope had ceased to fascinate.¹ But it seems clear, that apart from the Sadducees who denied the resurrection, the Jews of our Lord's age firmly believed in a future life, and in the reward of the good and the punishment of the wicked.

Our Lord expressed His teaching in the framework of Jewish Apocalypse, and yet with a difference. This present age was not for Him entirely evil. God ruled over it. He who clothed the flowers in their beauty, and fed the birds, had regard to His children's present needs. Already His followers could rejoice in the knowledge of the Father's love. The New Age was not for Him future only. Already it had broken through. The Kingdom was in men's midst, and His little flock could rejoice because that Kingdom would be theirs. Present and future were thus for our Lord inextricably one. Already men might know the Father's power and grace.

¹ The Messianic expectation with which the Apocalyptic hope was connected had brought about the revolt of Bar Cocheba in A.D. 130, which resulted in the final ruin of Palestinian Judaism.

In our Lord's teaching, the hope for the future was not so much primary as derivative. Since already men might have communion with God, they could be confident that that communion was of a kind that death could not destroy. His answer to the Sadducees is here of much importance. Popular Jewish piety spoke of the resurrection-life as if it were like our life on earth. The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, mockingly cited the case of a Levirate marriage. Whose wife, in the life to come, would a woman be who on earth had married successively seven brothers? Our Lord rejects the conception of the resurrection which this question implies; in the life to come there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage. But He rebukes the Sadducees for their rejection of the future life. The Sadducees recognized as scripture only the Pentateuch, and in the Pentateuch there is no teaching of a future life. Yet in the Book of Exodus it is written, "I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He was a God who had communion with living men. And because of that communion, those who trusted in Him could not die.¹ Thus our Lord bases the certainty of a future life, not on the principle of recompense, but on the nature of God's grace. Because of our experience of what God is, we may know that communion with Him begun on earth can never end.

Of the future of the wicked our Lord seems to have spoken with much reserve. It is significant that it

¹ Matt. xxii, 23-33 (Mark xii, 18-27; Luke xx. 27-40).

is from St. Matthew's Gospel that almost all the proof-texts for the doctrine of eternal punishment have been taken, for a comparison of this Gospel with those of St. Mark and St. Luke shows that in many places it has been influenced by the legalism of later Jewish Christianity. The word "eternal" (*æonian*) means "belonging to the age to come." It does not necessarily denote endless duration.¹ And fire may be a symbol, not so much of lasting torment, as of annihilation. It is impossible to construct a theory on a few phrases of doubtful authenticity and meaning. We have rather to turn to the general tenor of our Lord's teaching.

The doctrine of everlasting punishment is the extreme expression of the belief that God's relationship to men is one of strict retribution. That was not our Lord's teaching. Even the Sermon on the Mount is not the promulgation of a new law; it is rather the *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea of legal righteousness. The Scribes had developed the Law into an elaborate casuistry. Jesus, by giving the commands an inner meaning, showed the impossibility of their fulfilment by man's activity alone. The prohibition of murder and adultery was a prohibition also of hatred and of impure desire. Men are called to be perfect as their Father is.² This they cannot be of their own merit.

¹ Cp. 1 Enoch x. 10, "They hope to live in eternal life, and that each one of them will live for 500 years," i.e. eternal here means a long time, such as 500 years.

² On the Sermon on the Mount, as the *reductio ad absurdum* of legalism, see Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament* IV, Excursus 1.

When we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants. Salvation cannot be earned, and God's relationship to men is not one of strict recompense. Though our Lord spoke of rewards, these rewards are not of a legal kind. They come from God's free grace, and far surpass anything that we deserve.¹

Our Lord, too, speaks of the "lost," but He speaks of a God who seeks the lost until He find it, like a shepherd seeking a sheep that has strayed from the fold, or a woman seeking the coin she cannot afford to lose. Yet men are not merely like lost sheep or coins. They have the power of choice. They are like sons that go into the far country. The father does not bring the son back by force. Lost sheep can be carried, lost coins picked up. But the son has to return, and, in order that he may return, has to experience the connexion between sin and suffering. Yet this connexion is for his good. It is when in his hunger he would eat the husks, that he remembers his father's home, and returning finds there the welcome of his father's unwearying love.

In one passage our Lord is said to have spoken of the possibility of men so calling good evil as to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and thus, as St. Mark reports, to "be guilty of an eternal (*æonian*) sin."² The passage is full of difficulty. As it

¹ Cp. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*², pp. 258 ff., with its references to Matt. xix. 29 (Luke xviii. 29f.), Matt. xxv. 21-3 (Luke xix. 16-18), Luke xii. 37.

² iii. 29. Luke xii. 10 has "it shall not be forgiven him." Matt. xii. 12 is characteristically more emphatic, and adds, "neither in this age, nor the age to come."

stands, it teaches that those who wilfully call good evil may become incapable of being forgiven.

Amid much that is uncertain it is clear that our Lord spoke with grave solemnity of the dreadful consequences of sin.¹ The Kingdom that He preached was the greatest of all goods. It was the expression of the Father's love. But men might reject the Kingdom, and great would be their loss. Hence He may well have spoken of the possibility of men so consciously and wilfully identifying themselves with evil that their loss would be irreparable. That is the negative side of His preaching of the Kingdom. God would give; men may refuse. In hatred of good, men may call good evil. His message was a gospel. He proclaimed the inexhaustible love of God, but that love was stern. We have to fear God as well as trust Him. Because God is our Father, He will not tolerate our sin.

Our Lord's outlook on the future is thus the correlate of His proclamation of God and of God's Kingdom. The Christian hope has its most signal expression in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Henceforth the unseen is no longer the unknown, for in it Christ dwells, and its meaning is given to us in Him.

Of this distinctive Christian experience we have

¹ The other passages from which the doctrine of everlasting punishment has been derived are: (1) Mark ix. 43 ff. (cp. Matt. xviii. 8)—verse 48 is a quotation from Is. lxvi. 24, and it is not possible to base a doctrine on an ambiguous quotation—and (2) Matt. xxv. 46, which seems extraneous from the parable of Judgement which precedes it. For a full discussion of these passages see Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, pp. 108-15.

in St. Paul the first and greatest interpreter. Brought up in the most sombre phase of Judaism, he had regarded God's relationship to men as one of strict and legal recompense. At his conversion he learnt that the Man whose followers he had persecuted was the Messiah and his living Lord. Henceforth he knew that not law but grace was the final principle of God's rule, whilst from Christ's resurrection he gained the certainty that the New Age had broken through. The salvation he had looked for at the end of the present age, he in part already realized. Already he was adopted into sonship, he lived in Christ, he had the Spirit's power.

St. Paul's discovery that God's relationship with man was one of grace, not law, was immediate and complete. It was this which gave to his preaching its distinctive power and joy. But his hope for the future could not be tested by experience, and at first he expressed that hope in terms which show the influence of the Judaism he had inherited.

As a Jew, Paul had looked for the sudden appearance of the Messiah, and as a Christian he shared the common hope of the Church that Christ would very soon be manifested. So vividly had he preached at Thessalonica the coming of the Day of the Lord, that some of the Christians there were concerned about the fate of Christian friends who had died before the Day. St. Paul assures them that those who "have fallen asleep in Jesus" will rise from the dead and have their share in the glory

of Christ's appearance.¹ When he found that some had given up their livelihood to wait for Christ's appearance, he bade them get on with their work in quietness. Not until the Man of Sin was revealed would Christ return, and that Man of Sin was now kept in check by a restraining power.² By this restraining power he seems to have meant the Roman Empire, but that his converts could scarcely have discovered unless he had explained this to them when he was with them. The strangeness of these Apocalyptic symbols has naturally aroused much discussion, but St. Paul was not writing as an Apocalyptist concerned to reveal the mysteries of the future. He was writing as a missionary who sought to meet the needs of those whom he addressed.

In spite of his expectation of Christ's speedy return St. Paul looked forward to the time when the success of Christianity among the Gentiles would stir up the Jews to "jealousy," and lead them, too, to accept the Christian Gospel, so that, in the end, God would everywhere prevail.³ It seems difficult to reconcile this hope with his expectation of the swift return of Christ, and some scholars have sought to trace in his epistles the gradual emancipation of his thought from the idea of Christ's immediate Advent. There seems, however, to have been not so much an orderly development as a variation of emotional tension. Even in what may well be the last of his extant epistles, the

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

² 2 Thess. iii. 10 ff.

³ Rom. ix-xi.

Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul proclaims that "the Lord is at hand."¹ Yet Paul's expectation varies in its intensity, and oscillates between "soon" and "not yet."² At first, the "soon" predominated. Thus although he warned the Thessalonians that the Advent would be delayed, he yet at this stage hoped to be alive when Christ appeared.³ Later the "soon" and the "not yet" were, as Bricka puts it, "in equilibrium."⁴ In the Epistle to the Philippians, although the "soon" remains, it is the "not yet" which predominates. It mattered not whether he lived or died. If he lived, he would continue to meet his converts' needs; if he died, he would be at once with Christ, which was better far.

As the nearness of Christ's Return became less certain, the problem of life after death gained new importance. We have St. Paul's first solution in 1 Cor. xv. As that chapter is read at the burial of the dead, none is better known. Yet few chapters in St. Paul's Epistles are harder to interpret. It seems impossible to suppose that even at Corinth Christians could have denied the immortality of the soul. What they rejected was, in all probability, not immortality, but St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection body, which they seem to have con-

¹ iv. 5.

² Cp. Bricka, *Le fondement christologique de la morale paulienne*, pp. 65 ff., or the writer's *The Gospel of St. Paul*, pp. 237-64, from which some sentences are taken.

³ 1 Thess. iv. 15 ff.; 1 Cor. vii. 29 and xv. 51 f.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 3 f.; Rom. xiv. 8.

fused with the popular Jewish view that the bodies of the dead would, after a long sleep, be raised at the Resurrection.¹ That was not St. Paul's view, and the interest and the obscurity of the chapter are due to this: that he was "fighting on a double front,"² at once rejecting the cruder Jewish view and opposing those who, influenced by Greek ideas, denied the Resurrection altogether. Much in the chapter is Jewish. We have the familiar symbol of the trumpet whose sound will announce the end,³ and the Apocalyptic idea of an intermediate Kingdom to be ruled over by the Messiah between the time of His Advent and the end of all things.⁴ Yet the chapter advances to a view which is neither Jewish nor Greek, but Christian. The resurrection body will be spiritual, not natural, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Thus the phrase "spiritual body" seems at first sight a contradiction, but it served to show, as no other phrase available for him could do, that the Christian hope, while free from all materialistic conceptions of the future life, was not of mere continuance of existence, but of full and perfected personality.

¹ This view finds expression in the phrase found in the early form of the "Apostles' Creed—the form still used in the Baptismal Service of the Book of Common Prayer—"the resurrection of the *flesh*."

² J. Weiss, *Comm. in loc.*, p. 345.

³ xv. 52.

⁴ xv. 24 f. 4 Ezra gives the length of this period as 400 years. Rev. xx. 4 as 1,000 years. Under the influence of Jewish apocalypse Paul had taught that it was in this period that the saints who will meet Christ at His coming (1. Thess. iv. 17), will judge the angels (1 Cor. vi. 3) and reign with Him (1 Cor. iv. 8).

In this great chapter on the Resurrection, St. Paul had spoken as if the dead would be raised only at the Resurrection Day of Christ's return. Later, he became dissatisfied with this view. He had been very near to death himself in Asia, and as he pondered on the life after death, he could no longer endure the thought that at death the soul would be "naked," disembodied, till the time when Christ returned. His experience of Christ in the present made it impossible for him, when he pondered on this problem, to believe that at death communion with Christ would be deferred till the Resurrection Day. Instead, the soul at death would at once receive "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." His old fear of death departed, for he knew that at death he would be "at home with the Lord," his communion with Christ would be at death not interrupted but consummated.¹ When in prison and expecting execution, he could face death without dismay, for he would be with Christ, which is better far.²

St. Paul taught his converts to look forward to the future, not with hope alone, but awe. It was the surprise and disappointment of his missionary life that many in the churches he had founded failed to reveal in their character the Gospel's saving power. He had to warn his converts of their danger. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Salvation is of God's grace, but we can receive that grace in

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1-9.

² Phil. i. 23.

vain. God works in us and yet "with fear and trembling" must our salvation be worked out.¹

Of God's judgement on unbelievers, St. Paul says little. Over this present evil age Wrath ruled, and for those unredeemed by Christ Wrath would reach its full manifestation at the Judgement Day. In his earliest Epistles, he does little more than reproduce here the commonplaces of Jewish Apocalyptic expectation.² Later, as he contemplated the riches of God's grace in Christ there came to him the hope that grace would everywhere prevail, and, in the end, God would be "all in all."³ He looked for the return of Christ to be preceded, not, as in Thessalonians, by a world-wide apostasy, but by the reception into Christianity, not of Gentiles only, but of Jews. God's election, first of Jews and then of Gentiles, had for its purpose this: that He might have mercy upon all.⁴ The hope finds still clearer expression in the Epistles of the Captivity. God would so honour Christ's self-dedication to the Cross, that "every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁵ Yet even in these Epistles we have the warning that sinners cannot "inherit the Kingdom" of Christ and God.⁶ For him, as for us, the antinomy of God's

¹ Cp. Gal. vi. 7 f.; 2 Cor. vi. 1; Phil. ii. 12 f.

² E.g. "Flaming fire," "vengeance to them that know not God," "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord," 2 Thess. i. 8 ff. Eternal (æonian), as we have seen, may not mean "everlasting," whilst destruction may or may not mean annihilation.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 10-28.

⁴ Rom. v. 14-21.

⁵ Phil. ii. 6-11; cp. Col. i. 20 and Eph. i. 15-23.

⁶ Eph. v. 5; cp. Phil. iii. 19.

will and man's freedom thus remained unsolved. God's grace was adequate. Would some frustrate it by their sin? When God was "all in all," would all men have been reconciled, or would some by persistence in evil have become "dead," and so pass into the void? The revelation of God in Christ gave him here no certain answer. His certainty was in the grace of God revealed in Christ, and his prime concern was to lead men to a communion with God in Christ which death, so far from terminating, would not, as he later learnt, be able even to interrupt.

It is this certainty, and not the vestiges in his earlier Epistles of symbols and conceptions derived from Apocalyptic Judaism, which is St. Paul's great contribution to the Christian outlook on the future. It is a certainty which finds its fittest expression in the Johannine teaching on eternal life as something present, and yet future. Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent is eternal life.¹ In the Father's house are many abiding places, and so our hearts need not be troubled.² Already those that believe in Christ are called by God His children. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The eternal life begun on earth shall reach in heaven its consummation.³

The doctrinal development of the Church did much to confuse, but little to elucidate, the New

¹ John xvii. 3.

² John xiv. 1 f.

³ 1 John iii. 1 f.

Testament teaching on the Christian Hope. While the Church was still persecuted, many found comfort in the thought that Christ at His return would establish on earth a millennial Kingdom. The distinctive teaching of St. Paul and St. John was largely forgotten. In the East, redemption was conceived less as a communion with God which death would consummate, than as the impartation to our corrupted humanity of incorruptibility, and, in consequence, the ethical significance of eternal life was in part obscured. In the West, salvation was interpreted in a predominantly legal way. Forgiveness of sins was given at baptism, but for sins committed after baptism, reliance had to be put on the penitential praxis of the Church, and thus the future salvation was not realized as already present.

In the early Church there was much diversity of view about the life to come, and the theories which still divide the modern Church had their representatives in this period. Thus Origen, though he speaks of eternal punishment, and regarded a belief in it as salutary for some, yet believed in universal restoration. The fire of which Scripture speaks was, he teaches, spiritual, not material, and in that fire souls would be purified. Nor are views like those of Conditional Immortality entirely lacking. Yet it has to be confessed that the commonest belief was in eternal punishment, which by some Western writers, especially, was described with dreadful vividness.

Even so late as Augustine, the belief in Universal

Restoration still lingered in the Western Church, for he refers to "some, indeed many," who, because "with human feelings they feel compassion for the eternal punishment of the damned and their continual and unintermittent tortures, do not believe that it will take place."¹ Augustine, himself, strongly asserted his belief in everlasting punishment, and his influence helped to make this doctrine a commonplace of Western theology. In Augustine, the belief is made peculiarly horrible by being associated with predestination. God has, he taught, "justly predestinated to punishment" all but the definite number of the elect. His doctrine of predestination in its extreme form the Church later rejected, but, for the most part, the medieval theologians accepted Augustine's view that even infants who die unbaptized would be eternally punished, though their punishment would be "very light."²

Of great importance was Gregory the Great's development of the idea of purgatory. Tertullian had taught that whereas the wicked went at death at once to hell, of Christians only the martyrs went at once to heaven, whilst Augustine had spoken of the "purgatorial fire," by which the sins of Christians would be consumed.³ Gregory made of these surmises the definite teaching of the Church, and gave this doctrine of purgatory an immense importance by teaching that the souls who for their light offences were enduring the fire of purgatory could

¹ *Enchiridion*, § cxii.

² *Op. cit.*, §§ xcii, c, cxii, cxiii.

³ *Op. cit.*, § lxxix.

be helped by prayers and the masses provided by their friends on earth.

In popular medieval piety the torments of those in purgatory and in hell were so emphasized that often not hope but fear became the dominant note of the Christian outlook on the future.¹ Even the sober and restrained teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas is here quite pitiless. "In order that the happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them, and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, they are allowed to see perfectly the sufferings of the damned." "The blessed in glory will have no pity on the damned." "They will rejoice in the punishment of the wicked."² The fire of purgatory and of hell is "corporeal fire." In purgatory the fire is "possessed of cleansing power. But the punishment of the damned is not directed to their cleansing."³ Even of purgatory it is said that both in regard to "the pain of loss, namely the delay of the divine vision, and the pain of sense, namely punishment by corporeal fire," "the least pain of purgatory surpasses the greatest pain of this life."⁴ In one respect Thomas was more merciful in his teaching than some others. Infants dying unbaptized, since their

¹ This is denied by some modern Catholic writers. For illustrations in proof of this statement see Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, i. pp. 67-72, 441-58.

² *Summa Theologica*, iii, Supp. Q. XCIV. (Quotations are from the *Dominican E.T.*)

³ *Op. cit.*, Q. XCVII, 1 and 5.

⁴ From St. Thomas's "Commentary on the Sentences," given as an appendix in vol. xxi of the *E.T.* of the *Summa Theologica*, p. 225.

only sin is original sin, dwelt in a limbo without sensible pain, but, on the other hand, for them there is no hope such as there is for those in purgatory, and for them no prayers of the living can avail.¹

St. Thomas Aquinas is to-day the authoritative Doctor of the Roman Church, and his doctrines of purgatory and eternal punishment are still among its tenets. But in recent years the terror of a hell burning for ever with material fire has been unofficially lessened by the assumption that there will be few to endure its flames.

The doctrine of purgatory was so closely connected with the traffic in indulgences and subservience to priestly power that it was viewed with peculiar aversion by the Reformers. Luther's new confidence in the forgiveness of sins, and his association with this forgiveness of eternal life, made the Christian hope a present experience for those who shared in his rediscovery of saving faith. And since forgiveness of sin came from God's grace, and not from man's deservings, this new confidence led to the hope that at death the soul would go at once to heaven, there to know the fullness of God's grace in Christ. So the topography of the future was simplified. Instead of the nine circles of hell, the limbo, the seven ledges of purgatory, the nine heavens and the empyrean, familiar to us through Dante's great poem, Protestantism spoke only of hell and heaven. The very simplicity of this teaching makes its difficulty plain. We may believe

¹ *Op. cit.*, Q. LXIX, 7, and Q. LXXI, 7.

that all who truly believe in Christ go at death to heaven ; it is hard to believe that all else go to hell, there to suffer everlasting torments. What, for instance, of those who never heard of Christ ? Are they to suffer everlastingly for what was not their fault ?

In Protestantism the rigid theory of Eternal Punishment has been generally abandoned. The theories of Universal Restoration and of Conditional Immortality have been revived, and have to-day many confident supporters. All three theories in their extreme form seem open to grave objection.

Purposeless punishment is cruelty, and the belief which assigns to the damned incorruptible bodies in order that they may be eternally tormented is a contradiction of the central Christian message of God's holy and unwearied love. Thomas Aquinas does, indeed, seek to show that "the everlasting punishment of the wicked will not be altogether useless. For they are useful for two purposes. First, because thereby the Divine justice is safeguarded, which is acceptable to God for its own sake," and "secondly, they are useful because the elect rejoice therein, when they see God's justice in them, and realize that they have escaped them."¹ Neither argument seems Christian. Retribution, as we have seen, is for Christ, and the greatest of His interpreters, St. Paul, a means and not an end. It is not the final principle of God's rule. To say

¹ *Op. cit.*, Q. XCIX, 1.

that God will inflict everlasting torment on those incapable of profiting by it is blasphemy, for it makes God not better, but worse than His creatures. Thomas Aquinas faced the objections to this doctrine with characteristic fairness, and evidently realized their force. Many popular defenders of the doctrine have seemed to lack the imagination necessary to understand what it is they claim. Others, like Pusey, who accept the belief in eternal punishment, and take "the everlasting fire" literally, yet mitigate the severity of their conclusions by the hope that actually not many will thus be punished.¹ Impossible as is this theory, it yet does express a salutary truth. Sin estranges from God, and to be separate from God is misery. Retribution is not an end, but it is a means. We are false to the teaching of Christ if we fail to think with great solemnity on the importance of the issue of this life.

It was not one in bondage to traditional orthodoxy, but Stopford Brooke, the Liberal and Unitarian, who wrote,

" Three men went out one Summer night,
No care had they, or aim,
And dined and drank—' Ere we go home,
We'll have,' they said, ' a game.'

Three girls began that Summer night
A life of endless shame ;
And went through drink, disease and death,
As swift as racing flame.

¹ *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* pp. ix and 110.

Lawless and homeless, foul, they died ;
 Rich, loved, and praised the men ;
 But when they all shall meet with God,
 And Justice speaks—what then ? ”¹

As Martineau puts it, “ If Death gives final discharge alike to the sinner and the saint, we are warranted in saying that Conscience has told more lies than it has ever called to their account.”² Yet though judgement there be, it is the judgement of the God who has revealed in Christ His holy love, to whom even judgement is an instrument of mercy.

Professor William James described the view of Universal Restoration as an “ idyllic theory.” In some of its forms, it has the unreality of an idyll. We would all like to believe that, as Sir Henry Jones puts it, “ God’s goodness being unlimited, the opportunity not made use of by man in the present life is renewed for him in another life, and in still another ; till, at last, his spirit finds rest in the service of the God of love.” We dare not with him speak of this as a certainty. Like the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, this theory assumes the indestructibility of the soul. Thus Sir Henry Jones asserts that “ denial of the immortality of the soul implies absolute scepticism.”³ But the immortality of the soul does not seem to be a necessary Christian doctrine. Communion with God is life. To be

¹ *Justice in Poems* (published in 1888), p. 85.

² *A Study in Religion*, ii, p. 366.

³ *A Faith that Enquires*, p. 347.

cut off from God means not life but death. If Universal Restoration is to be a Christian doctrine, it will not be because of the belief in the inherent immortality of the soul, but because of faith in God's unwearying love. In this form, the theory is purged of moral levity.¹ The man who has wandered off to the far country may have a long and painful journey back, but, when he repents, the Father's welcome is ready for him.

Yet can even the divine love ensure that all will thus repent? It is freedom to choose which differentiates men from animals and makes of man a personal being. What if a man so chooses evil that good has for him no attraction? It is this consideration which leads many to accept a theory of Conditional Immortality. In its extreme form, this theory also seems inadequate.

It is hard to believe that those only will live who at death have already gained through faith in Christ that knowledge of God which is life eternal. The theory in this form seems too simple for the facts. The God who seeks until He finds will surely not be content to have all who do not know of Christ thus "lost." Nor may we speak as if only the athletes of the moral life attain to immortality.

" And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

¹ For a sober and adequate presentation of this theory, see Leckie, *The World to Come and Final Destiny*.

The Christian message does not speak, as does Matthew Arnold here, of eternal life as something to be earned. It comes from our response to the grace of God.

If life be missed by that response not being given, we may be confident that there will be an opportunity such as many lack on earth of knowing what God is. So understood, the theory that men are not so much "immortal" as "immortable"¹ goes well with the New Testament teaching that life means communion with God.

For ourselves, we dare not dogmatize about the final condition of those who have been called the "lost." Christian theology is, from the standpoint adopted in this book, the attempt to state in the categories of the age the revelation given us in Christ and known through the corporate experience of the Church. In this sphere, revelation gives no certain word, whilst the confirmation of experience must obviously be lacking. We cannot claim for any theory here the authority of revelation. Our theories are at best surmises—deductions from the central certainties of the Gospel.

As Christians we have seen in Christ the almighty, holy love of God. In the Cross we have the indication of God's grace and of the sin of man. As we remember that grace, it is hard to believe that any will be able finally to resist the strong and

¹ Cp. J. Y. Simpson, *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, an attractive statement of this theory, which connects it with the evolution of the race.

patient love of God. Yet whatever heaven be, we know that it will mean knowledge of God and communion with Him. The God of Jesus Christ is not a despot but the Father. As such, He does not coerce men. We remember the words our Gospel records assign to Jesus about the dreadful possibility of men so calling good evil, that they sin against the Holy Spirit, and become incapable of forgiveness. Amid all that is uncertain, this at least is sure. Our Judge will be the God whose glory we have seen in the face of Jesus Christ. In judgement as in redemption, Christ is the image of the Father, and so we know that judgement will not be arbitrary or purposeless. It will be the judgement of love like the love of Christ. That seems to mean that, if any be lost, it will be because they have so identified themselves with evil that they have lost the power of choice; they have ceased to be persons, and as things may pass into the void.

Such surmises deal with what lies beyond our knowledge. It is ours to preach God's reconciling word, to proclaim the holy love of God in Christ, to remind ourselves and others that the only real life is life lived in accord with God's will. Sin means misery and loss and, if persisted in, with full knowledge and complete determination, may mean spiritual suicide. It is better to enter into life maimed than not to enter into it at all. The one eternal good is the life lived in conformity with God's will. The New Testament speaks to us of the complete manifestation of God's power at the Resurrection Day. It is

the Apocalyptic symbol for an essential element of the Christian faith: whether some be lost and pass into the void, or whether all be saved, in the end God shall be all in all. However much they be delayed by human folly and sin, God's gracious purposes will be fulfilled, and His Kingdom perfected.

Although we can only speak with reserve and hesitation about the last state of the disobedient, the Christian hope is sure. That hope does not concern the future only. It is part of faith's present possession. Our faith is faith in an eternal God, and brings us already into communion with a God who will not suffer that communion to be destroyed by death. Much of the popular uncertainty about the life to come is due to the Church's failure to preach eternal life as a present experience. As we have seen, our Lord spoke of the resources of the Kingdom as already present, whilst St. Paul spoke confidently of his earthly life as being already a life in Christ. Since Christ was risen, the eternal world was not to him a world unknown. Its content was given him in Christ. It is a phase of New Testament experience which historic Protestantism has tended to ignore. Powerfully the Fathers of the Protestant Church depicted Christ's death as redemption from sin and guilt, but they were less successful in interpreting the other phase of St. Paul's teaching, which gathered around the Resurrection of Christ and interpreted that Resurrection as the beginning of

the Age to Come, so that already we may live in and for the eternal, experiencing in time the powers of the eternal world, bearing already, as he puts it, "the image of the heavenly."¹ It is this which explains those words of his which have often been misunderstood and so condemned. "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable."² He did not mean that virtue was valueless unless it had in the future its reward. He did mean that the certainty of his faith depended on Christ's Resurrection, and the consummation of our life in Him. His present experience of Christ would have been insecure unless he had known that in the future it would be perfected.

Thus the Christian hope is the concern of the present as of the future. Through it we know that the values by which we are called to live are values not transient but divine. Already we have a communion with God which is eternal life, and that communion death is powerless to interrupt. We know only in part, but we know enough for our pilgrim way, and because of the revelation of God in Christ we can be sure that way will lead us to the Father's home, where that revelation will be confirmed and consummated. The God of eternity is the God whose glory we have seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 49.

² 1 Cor. xv. 19.

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