

Christianity & Liberalism

by

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Chapter 5

“Christ”

Three points of difference between liberalism and Christianity have been noticed so far. The two religions are different with regard to the presuppositions of the Christian message, the view of God and the view of man; and they are also different with regard to their estimate of the Book in which the message is contained. It is not surprising, then, that they differ fundamentally with regard to the message itself. But before the message is considered, we must consider the Person upon whom the message is based. The Person is Jesus. And in their attitude toward Jesus, liberalism and Christianity are sharply opposed.

The Christian attitude toward Jesus appears in the whole New Testament. In examining the New Testament witness it has become customary in recent years to begin with the Epistles of Paul.¹ This custom is sometimes based upon error; it is sometimes based upon the view that the Epistles of Paul are “primary” sources of information, while the Gospels are considered to be only “secondary.” As a matter of fact, the Gospels, as well as the Epistles, are primary sources of the highest possible value. But the custom of beginning with Paul is at least convenient. Its convenience is due to the large measure of agreement which prevails with regard to the Pauline Epistles.

About the date and authorship of the Gospels there is debate; but with regard to the authorship and approximate date of the principal epistles of Paul all serious historians, whether Christian or non-Christian, are agreed. It is universally admitted that the chief of the extant epistles attributed to Paul were really written by a man of the first Christian generation, who was himself a contemporary of Jesus and had come into personal contact with certain of Jesus’ intimate friends. What, then, was the attitude of this representative of the first Christian generation toward Jesus of Nazareth?

The answer cannot be at all in doubt. The apostle Paul clearly stood always toward Jesus in a truly religious relationship. Jesus was not for Paul merely an

¹ This method of approach has been followed by the present writer in *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*, 1921.

example for faith; He was primarily the object of faith. The religion of Paul did not consist in having faith in God like the faith which Jesus had in God; it consisted rather in having faith in Jesus. An appeal to the example of Jesus is not indeed absent from the Pauline Epistles, and certainly it was not absent from Paul's life. The example of Jesus was found by Paul, moreover, not merely in the acts of incarnation and atonement but even in the daily life of Jesus in Palestine. Exaggeration with regard to this matter should be avoided. Plainly Paul knew far more about the life of Jesus than in the Epistles he has seen fit to tell; plainly the Epistles do not begin to contain all the instruction which Paul had given to the Churches at the commencement of their Christian life. But even after exaggerations have been avoided, the fact is significant enough. The plain fact is that imitation of Jesus, important though it was for Paul, was swallowed up by something far more important still. Not the example of Jesus, but the redeeming work of Jesus, was the primary thing for Paul. The religion of Paul was not primarily faith in God like Jesus' faith; it was faith in Jesus; Paul committed to Jesus without reserve the eternal destinies of his soul. That is what we mean when we say that Paul stood in a truly religious relation to Jesus.

But Paul was not the first to stand in this religious relation to Jesus. Evidently, at this decisive point, he was only continuing an attitude toward Jesus which had already been assumed by those who had been Christians before him. Paul was not indeed led to assume that attitude by the persuasions of the earlier disciples; he was converted by the Lord Himself on the road to Damascus. But the faith so induced was in essentials like the faith which had already prevailed among the earlier disciples. Indeed, an account of the redeeming work of Christ is designated by Paul as something that he had "received"; and that account had evidently been accompanied already in the primitive Church by trust in the Redeemer. Paul was not the first who had faith in Jesus, as distinguished from faith in God like the faith which Jesus had; Paul was not the first to make Jesus the object of faith.

So much will no doubt be admitted by all. But who were the predecessors of Paul in making Jesus the object of faith? The obvious answer has always been that they were the primitive disciples in Jerusalem, and that answer really stands abundantly firm. A strange attempt has indeed been made in recent years, by Bousset and Heitmüller, to cast doubt upon it. What Paul "received," it has been suggested, was received, not from the primitive Jerusalem Church, but from such Christian communities as the one at Antioch. But this attempt at interposing an extra link between the Jerusalem Church and Paul has resulted in failure. The Epistles really provide abundant information as to Paul's relations to Jerusalem. Paul was deeply interested in the Jerusalem Church; in opposition to his Judaizing opponents, who had in certain matters appealed to the original apostles against him, he emphasizes his agreement with Peter and the rest. But even the Judaizers had had no objection to Paul's way of regarding Jesus as the object of faith; about that matter there is not in the Epistles the

least suspicion of any debate. About the place of the Mosaic law in the Christian life there was discussion, though even with regard to that matter the Judaizers were entirely unjustified in appealing to the original apostles against Paul. But with regard to the attitude toward Jesus the original apostles had evidently given not even the slightest color for an appeal to them against the teaching of Paul. Evidently in making Jesus the object of religious faith—the thing that was the heart and soul of Paul’s religion—Paul was in no disagreement with those who had been apostles before him. Had there been such disagreement, the “right hand of fellowship,” which the pillars of the Jerusalem Church gave to Paul (Gal. ii. 9), would have been impossible. The facts are really too plain. The whole of early Christian history is a hopeless riddle unless the Jerusalem Church, as well as Paul, made Jesus the object of religious faith. Primitive Christianity certainly did not consist in the mere imitation of Jesus.

But was this “faith in Jesus” justified by the teaching of Jesus Himself? The question has really been answered in Chapter 2. It was there shown that Jesus most certainly did not keep His Person out of His gospel, but on the contrary presented Himself as the Savior of men. The demonstration of that fact was the highest merit of the late James Denney. His work on “Jesus and the Gospel” is faulty in some respects; it is marred by an undue concessiveness toward some modern types of criticism. But just because of its concessiveness with regard to many important matters, its main thesis stands all the more firm. Denney has shown that no matter what view be taken of the sources underlying the Gospels, and no matter what elements in the Gospels be rejected as secondary, still even the supposed “historical Jesus,” as He is left after the critical process is done, plainly presented Himself, not merely as an example for faith, but as the object of faith.

It may be added, moreover, that Jesus did not invite the confidence of men by minimizing the load which He offered to bear. He did not say: “Trust me to give you acceptance with God, because acceptance with God is not difficult; God does not regard sin so seriously after all.” On the contrary Jesus presented the wrath of God in a more awful way than it was afterwards presented by His disciples; it was Jesus—Jesus whom modern liberals represent as a mild-mannered exponent of an indiscriminating love—it was Jesus who spoke of the outer darkness and the everlasting fire, of the sin that shall not be forgiven either in this world or in that which is to come. There is nothing in Jesus’ teaching about the character of God which in itself can evoke trust. On the contrary the awful presentation can give rise, in the hearts of us sinners, only to despair. Trust arises only when we attend to God’s way of salvation. And that way is found in Jesus. Jesus did not invite the confidence of men by a minimizing presentation of what was necessary in order that sinners might stand faultless before the awful throne of God. On the contrary, he invited confidence by the presentation of His own wondrous Person. Great was the guilt of sin, but Jesus was greater still. God, according to Jesus, was a loving

Father; but He was a loving Father, not of the sinful world, but of those whom He Himself had brought into His Kingdom through the Son.

The truth is, the witness of the New Testament, with regard to Jesus as the object of faith, is an absolutely unitary witness. The thing is rooted far too deep in the records of primitive Christianity ever to be removed by any critical process. The Jesus spoken of in the New Testament was no mere teacher of righteousness, no mere pioneer in a new type of religious life, but One who was regarded, and regarded Himself, as the Savior whom men could trust.

But by modern liberalism He is regarded in a totally different way. Christians stand in a religious relation to Jesus; liberals do not stand in a religious relation to Jesus—what difference could be more profound than that? The modern liberal preacher reverences Jesus; he has the name of Jesus forever on his lips; he speaks of Jesus as the supreme revelation of God; he enters, or tries to enter, into the religious life of Jesus. But he does not stand in a religious relation to Jesus. Jesus for him is an example for faith, not the object of faith. The modern liberal tries to have faith in God like the faith which he supposes Jesus had in God; but he does not have faith in Jesus.

According to modern liberalism, in other words, Jesus was the Founder of Christianity because He was the first Christian, and Christianity consists in maintenance of the religious life which Jesus instituted.

But was Jesus really a Christian? Or, to put the same question in another way, are we able or ought we as Christians to enter in every respect into the experience of Jesus and make Him in every respect our example? Certain difficulties arise with regard to this question.

The first difficulty appears in the Messianic consciousness of Jesus. The Person whom we are asked to take as our example thought that He was the heavenly Son of Man who was to be the final Judge of all the earth. Can we imitate Him there? The trouble is not merely that Jesus undertook a special mission which can never be ours. That difficulty might conceivably be overcome; we might still take Jesus as our example by adapting to our station in life the kind of character which He displayed in His. But another difficulty is more serious. The real trouble is that the lofty claim of Jesus, if, as modern liberalism is constrained to believe, the claim was unjustified, places a moral stain upon Jesus' character. What shall be thought of a human being who lapsed so far from the path of humility and sanity as to believe that the eternal destinies of the world were committed into His hands? The truth is that if Jesus be merely an example, He is not a worthy example; for He claimed to be far more.

Against this objection modern liberalism has usually adopted a policy of palliation. The Messianic consciousness, it is said, arose late in the experience of Jesus, and was not really fundamental. What was really fundamental, the liberal historians continue, was the consciousness of sonship toward God—a consciousness which may be shared by every humble disciple. The Messianic consciousness, on this view, arose only as an afterthought. Jesus was con-

scious, it is said, of standing toward God in a relation of untroubled sonship. But He discovered that this relation was not shared by others. He became aware, therefore, of a mission to bring others into the place of privilege which He Himself already occupied. That mission made Him unique, and to give expression to His uniqueness He adopted, late in His life and almost against His will, the faulty category of Messiahship.

Many are the forms in which some such psychological reconstruction of the life of Jesus has been set forth in recent years. The modern world has devoted its very best literary efforts to this task. But the efforts have resulted in failure. In the first place, there is no real evidence that the reconstructed Jesus is historical. The sources know nothing of a Jesus who adopted the category of Messiahship late in life and against His will. On the contrary the only Jesus that they present is a Jesus who based the whole of His ministry upon His stupendous claim. In the second place, even if the modern reconstruction were historical it would not solve the problem at all. The problem is a moral and psychological problem. How can a human being who lapsed so far from the path of rectitude as to think Himself to be the judge of all the earth—how can such a human being be regarded as the supreme example for mankind? It is absolutely no answer to the objection to say that Jesus accepted the category of Messiahship reluctantly and late in life. No matter when He succumbed to temptation the outstanding fact is that, on this view, He did succumb; and that moral defeat places an indelible stain upon His character. No doubt it is possible to make excuses for Him, and many excuses are as a matter of fact made by the liberal historians. But what has become then of the claim of liberalism to be truly Christian? Can a man for whom excuses have to be made be regarded as standing to his modern critics in a relationship even remotely analogous to that in which the Jesus of the New Testament stands to the Christian Church?

But there is another difficulty in the way of regarding Jesus as simply the first Christian. This second difficulty concerns the attitude of Jesus toward sin. If Jesus is separated from us by his Messianic consciousness, He is separated from us even more fundamentally by the absence in Him of a sense of sin.

With respect to the sinlessness of Jesus modern liberal historians find themselves in a quandary. To affirm that He was sinless means to relinquish much of that ease of defending liberal religion which the liberal historians are anxious to preserve, and involves hazardous assumptions with regard to the nature of sin. For if sin is merely imperfection, how can an absolute negation of it be ventured upon within a process of nature which is supposed to be ever changing and ever advancing? The very idea of “sinlessness,” much more the reality of it, requires us to conceive of sin as transgression of a fixed law or a fixed standard, and involves the conception of an absolute goodness. But to that conception of an absolute goodness the modern evolutionary view of the world properly speaking has no right. At any rate, if such absolute goodness is to be allowed to intrude at a definite point in the present world-process, we are

involved in that supernaturalism which, as will be observed later, is the very thing that the modern reconstruction of Christianity is most anxious to avoid. Once affirm that Jesus was sinless and all other men sinful, and you have entered into irreconcilable conflict with the whole modern point of view. On the other hand, if there are scientific objections, from the liberal point of view, against an affirmation of the sinlessness of Jesus, there are also very obvious religious objections against an opposite affirmation of His sinfulness—difficulties for modern liberalism as well as for the theology of the historic Church. If Jesus was sinful like other men, the last remnant of his uniqueness would seem to have disappeared, and all continuity with the previous development of Christianity would seem to be destroyed.

In the face of this quandary the modern liberal historian is inclined to avoid rash assertions, he will not be sure that when Jesus taught His disciples to say, “Forgive us our debts,” He did not pray that prayer with them; on the other hand he will not really face the results that logically follow from his doubt. In his perplexity, he is apt to be content with the assertion that whether Jesus was sinless or not He was at any rate immeasurably above the rest of us. Whether Jesus was “sinless” is an academic question, we shall probably be told, that concerns the mysteries of the absolute; what we need to do is to bow in simple reverence before a holiness which compared with our impurity is as a white light in a dark place.

That such avoidance of the difficulty is unsatisfactory hardly requires proof; obviously the liberal theologian is trying to obtain the religious advantages of an affirmation of sinlessness in Jesus at the same time that he obtains the supposed scientific advantages of its denial. But just for the moment we are not concerned with the question at all; we are not concerned to determine whether as a matter of fact Jesus was sinless or no. What we need to observe just now is that whether Jesus was sinful or sinless, at any rate in the record of His life which has actually come into our hands, He displays no consciousness of sin. Even if the words “Why callest thou me good?” meant that Jesus denied the attribute of goodness to Himself—which they do not—it would still remain true that He never in His recorded words deals in any intelligible way with sin in His own life. In the account of the temptation we are told how He kept sin from entering, but never how He dealt with it after its entrance had been effected. The religious experience of Jesus, as it is recorded in the Gospels, in other words, gives us no information about the way in which sin shall be removed.

Yet in the Gospels Jesus is represented constantly as dealing with the problem of sin. He always assumes that other men are sinful; yet He never finds sin in Himself. A stupendous difference is found here between Jesus’ experience and ours.

That differences prevents the religious experience of Jesus from serving as the sole basis of the Christian life. For clearly if Christianity is anything it is a way of getting rid of sin. At any rate, if it is not that, it is useless; for all men

have sinned. And as a matter of fact it was that from the very beginning. Whether the beginning of Christian preaching be put on the day of Pentecost or when Jesus first taught in Galilee, in either case one of its first words was "Repent." Throughout the whole New Testament the Christianity of the primitive Church is represented clearly as a way of getting rid of sin. But if Christianity is a way of getting rid of sin, then Jesus was not a Christian; for Jesus, so far as we can see, had no sin to get rid of.

Why then did the early Christians call themselves disciples of Jesus, why did they connect themselves with His name? The answer is not difficult. They connected themselves with His name not because He was their example in their ridding themselves of sin, but because their method of ridding themselves of sin was by means of Him. It was what Jesus did for them, and not primarily the example of His own life, which made them Christians. Such is the witness of all our primitive records. The record is fullest, as has already been observed, in the case of the Apostle Paul; clearly Paul regarded himself as saved from sin by what Jesus did for him on the cross. But Paul did not stand alone. "Christ died for our sin" was not something that Paul had originated; it was something he had "received." The benefits of that saving work of Christ, according to the primitive Church, were to be received by faith; even if the classic formulation of this conviction should prove to be due to Paul, the conviction itself clearly goes back to the very beginning. The primitive Christians felt themselves in need of salvation. How, they asked, should the load of sin be removed? Their answer is perfectly plain. They simply trusted Jesus to remove it. In other words they had "faith" in Him.

Here again we are brought face to face with the significant fact which was noticed at the beginning of this chapter; the early Christians regarded Jesus not merely as an example for faith but primarily as the object of faith. Christianity from the beginning was a means of getting rid of sin by trust in Jesus of Nazareth. But if Jesus was thus the object of Christian faith, He Himself was no more a Christian than God is a religious being. God is the object of all religion, He is absolutely necessary to all religion; but He Himself is the only being in the universe who can never in His own nature be religious. So it is with Jesus as related to Christian faith. Christian faith is trust reposed in Him for the removal of sin; He could not repose trust (in the sense with which we are here concerned) in Himself; therefore He was certainly not a Christian. If we are looking for a complete illustration of the Christian life we cannot find it in the religious experience of Jesus.

This conclusion needs to be guarded against two objections.

In the first place, it will be said, are we not failing to do justice to the true humanity of Jesus, which is affirmed by the creeds of the Church as well as by the modern theologians? When we say that Jesus could not illustrate Christian faith any more than God can be religious, are we not denying to Jesus that religious experience which is a necessary element in true humanity? Must not Jesus, if He be true man, have been more than the object of religious faith;

must He not have had a religion of His own? The answer is not far to seek. Certainly Jesus had a religion of His own; His prayer was real prayer, His faith was real religious faith. His relation to His heavenly Father was not merely that of a child to a father; it was that of a man to his God. Certainly Jesus had a religion; without it His humanity would indeed have been but incomplete. Without doubt Jesus had a religion; the fact is of the utmost importance. But it is equally important to observe that that religion which Jesus had was not Christianity. Christianity is a way of getting rid of sin, and Jesus was without sin. His religion was a religion of Paradise, not a religion of sinful humanity. It was a religion to which we may perhaps in some sort attain in heaven, when the process of our purification is complete (though even then the memory of redemption will never leave us); but certainly it is not a religion with which we can begin. The religion of Jesus was a religion of untroubled sonship; Christianity is a religion of the attainment of sonship by the redeeming work of Christ.

But if that be true, it may be objected, in the second place, that Jesus is being removed far from us, that on our view He is no longer our Brother and our Example. The objection is welcome, since it helps us to avoid misunderstandings and exaggerations.

Certainly if our zeal for the greatness and uniqueness of Jesus led us so to separate Him from us that He could no longer be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, the result would be disastrous; Jesus' coming would lose much of its significance. But it ought to be observed that likeness is not always necessary to nearness. The experience of a father in his personal relation to his son is quite different from that of the son in his relation to his father; but just that very difference binds father and son all the more closely together. The father cannot share the specifically filial affection of the son, and the son cannot share the specifically paternal affection of the father: yet no mere relationship of brotherhood, perhaps, could be quite so close. Fatherhood and sonship are complementary to each other; hence the dissimilarity, but hence also the closeness of the bond. It may be somewhat the same in the case of our relationship to Jesus. If He were exactly the same as ourselves, if He were merely our Brother, we should not be nearly so close to Him as we are when He stands to us in the relationship of a Savior.

Nevertheless Jesus as a matter of fact is a Brother to us as well as a Savior—an elder Brother whose steps we may follow. The imitation of Jesus has a fundamental place in Christian life; it is perfectly correct to represent Him as our supreme and only perfect example.

Certainly so far as the field of ethics is concerned there can be no dispute. No matter what view may be taken of His origin and His higher nature, Jesus certainly led a true human life, and in it He came into those varied human relationships which provide opportunity for moral achievement. His life of perfect purity was led in no cold aloofness from the throng and press; His unselfish love was exercised not merely in mighty deeds, but in acts of kindness which

the humblest of us has the power, if only we had the will, to imitate. More effective, too, than all detail is the indefinable impression of the whole; Jesus is felt to be far greater than any of His individual words or deeds. His calmness, unselfishness and strength have been the wonder of the ages; the world can never lose the inspiration of that radiant example.

Jesus is an example, moreover, not merely for the relations of man to man but also for the relation of man to God; imitation of Him may extend and must extend to the sphere of religion as well as to that of ethics. Indeed religion and ethics in Him were never separated; no single element in His life can be understood without reference to His heavenly Father. Jesus was the most religious man who ever lived; He did nothing and said nothing and thought nothing without the thought of God. If His example means anything at all it means that a human life without the conscious presence of God— even though it be a life of humanitarian service outwardly like the ministry of Jesus— is a monstrous perversion. If we would follow truly in Jesus' steps, we must obey the first commandment as well as the second that is like unto it; we must love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. The difference between Jesus and ourselves serves only to enforce, certainly not to invalidate, the lesson. If the One to whom all power was given needed refreshment and strengthening in prayer, we more; if the One to whom the lilies of the field revealed the glory of God yet went into the sanctuary, surely we need such assistance even more than He; if the wise and holy One could say "Thy will be done," surely submission is yet more in place for us whose wisdom is as the foolishness of children.

Thus Jesus is the supreme example for men. But the Jesus who can serve as an example is not the Jesus of modern liberal reconstruction, but only the Jesus of the New Testament. The Jesus of modern liberalism advanced stupendous claims which were not founded upon fact—such conduct ought never to be made a norm. The Jesus of modern liberalism all through His ministry employed language which was extravagant and absurd—and it is only to be hoped that imitation of Him will not lead to an equal extravagance in His modern disciples. If the Jesus of naturalistic reconstruction were really taken as an example, disaster would soon follow. As a matter of fact, however, the modern liberal does not really take as his example the Jesus of the liberal historians; what he really does in practice is to manufacture as his example a simple exponent of a non-doctrinal religion whom the abler historians even of his own school know never to have existed except in the imagination of modern men.

Very different is the imitation of the real Jesus—the Jesus of the New Testament who actually lived in the first century of our era. That Jesus advanced lofty claims; but His claims, instead of being the extravagant dreams of an enthusiast, were sober truth. On His lips, therefore, language which in the reduced Jesus of modern reconstruction would be frenzied or absurd becomes fraught with blessing for mankind. Jesus demanded that those who followed

Him should be willing to break even the holiest ties—He said, “If a man cometh to me and hateth not his father and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple,” and “Let the dead bury their dead.” Coming from the mere prophet constructed by modern liberalism, those words would be monstrous; coming from the real Jesus, they are sublime. How great was the mission of mercy which justified such words! And how wonderful the condescension of the eternal Son! How matchless an example for the children of men! Well might Paul appeal to the example of the incarnate Savior; well might he say, “Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” The imitation of the real Jesus will never lead a man astray.

But the example of Jesus is a perfect example only if He was justified in what He offered to men. And He offered, not primarily guidance, but salvation; He presented Himself as the object of men’s faith. That offer is rejected by modern liberalism, but it is accepted by Christian men.

There is a profound difference, then, in the attitude assumed by modern liberalism and by Christianity toward Jesus the Lord. Liberalism regards Him as an Example and Guide; Christianity, as a Savior: liberalism makes Him an example for faith; Christianity, the object of faith.

This difference in the attitude toward Jesus depends upon a profound difference as to the question who Jesus was. If Jesus was only what the liberal historians suppose that He was, then trust in Him would be out of place; our attitude toward Him could be that of pupils to a Master and nothing more. But if He was what the New Testament represents Him as being, then we can safely commit to Him the eternal destinies of our souls. What then is the difference between liberalism and Christianity with regard to the person of our Lord?

The answer might be difficult to set forth in detail. But the essential thing can be put almost in a word—liberalism regards Jesus as the fairest flower of humanity; Christianity regards Him as a supernatural Person.²

The conception of Jesus as a supernatural Person runs all through the New Testament. In the Epistles of Paul, of course, it is quite clear. Without the slightest doubt Paul separated Jesus from ordinary humanity and placed Him on the side of God. The words in Gal. i. 1, “not from men nor through a man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead,” are only typical of what appears everywhere in the Epistles. The same contrast between Jesus Christ and ordinary humanity is everywhere presupposed. Paul does indeed call Jesus Christ a man. But the way in which he speaks of Jesus as a man only deepens the impression which has already been received. Paul speaks of the humanity of Jesus apparently as though the fact that Jesus was a man were something strange, something wonderful. At any rate, the really outstanding fact is that in the Epistles of Paul, Jesus is everywhere separated from ordinary humanity; the deity of Christ is everywhere presupposed. It is a mat-

² Compare *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*. 1921, pp. 118-13.

ter of small consequence whether Paul ever applies to Jesus the Greek word which is translated “God” in the English Bible; certainly it is very difficult, in view of Rom. ix. 5, to deny that he does. However that may be, the term “Lord,” which is Paul’s regular designation of Jesus, is really just as much a designation of deity as is the term “God.” It was a designation of deity even in the pagan religions with which Paul’s converts were familiar; and (what is far more important) in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was current in Paul’s day and was used by the Apostle himself, the term was used to translate the “Jahwe” of the Hebrew text. And Paul does not hesitate to apply to Jesus stupendous passages in the Greek Old Testament where the term Lord thus designates the God of Israel. But what is perhaps most significant of all for the establishment of the Pauline teaching about the Person of Christ is that Paul everywhere stands in a religious attitude toward Jesus. He who is thus the object of religious faith is surely no mere man, but a supernatural Person, and indeed a Person who was God.

Thus Paul regarded Jesus as a supernatural Person. The fact would be surprising if it stood alone. Paul was a contemporary of Jesus. What must this Jesus have been that He should be lifted thus quickly above the limits of ordinary humanity and placed upon the side of God?

But there is something far more surprising still. The truly surprising thing is that the view which Paul had of Jesus was also the view which was held by Jesus’ intimate friends.³ The fact appears in the Pauline Epistles themselves to say nothing of other evidence. Clearly the Epistles presuppose a fundamental unity between Paul and the original apostles with regard to the Person of Christ; for if there had been any controversy about this matter it would certainly have been mentioned. Even the Judaizers, the bitter opponents of Paul, seem to have had no objection to Paul’s conception of Jesus as a supernatural Person. The really impressive thing about Paul’s view of Christ is that it is not defended. Indeed it is hardly presented in the Epistles in any systematic way. Yet it is everywhere presupposed. The inference is perfectly plain—Paul’s conception of the Person of Christ was a matter of course in the primitive Church. With regard to this matter Paul appears in perfect harmony with all Palestinian Christians. The men who had walked and talked with Jesus and had seen Him subject to the petty limitations of earthly life agreed with Paul fully in regarding Him as a supernatural Person, seated on the throne of all Being.

Exactly the same account of Jesus as that which is presupposed by the Pauline Epistles appears in the detailed narrative of the Gospels. The Gospels agree with Paul in presenting Jesus as a supernatural Person, and the agreement appears not in one or two of the Gospels, but in all four. The day is long past, if there ever was such a day, when the Gospel of John, as presenting a divine Jesus, could be contrasted with the Gospel of Mark, as presenting a

³ Compare “*History_and_Faith*,” 1915, pp. 5f.

human Jesus. On the contrary, all four Gospels clearly present a Person lifted far above the level of ordinary humanity; and the Gospel of Mark, the shortest and according to modern criticism the earliest of the Gospels, renders particularly prominent Jesus' superhuman works of power. In all four Gospels Jesus appears possessed of a sovereign power over the forces of nature; in all four Gospels, as in the whole New Testament, He appears clearly as a supernatural Person.⁴

But what is meant by a "supernatural Person"; what is meant by the supernatural?

The conception of the "supernatural" is closely connected with that of "miracle"; a miracle is the supernatural manifesting itself in the external world. But what is the supernatural? Many definitions have been proposed. But only one definition is really correct. A supernatural event is one that takes place by the immediate, as distinguished from the mediate, power of God. The possibility of the supernatural, if supernatural be defined in this way, presupposes two things—it presupposes (1) the existence of a personal God, and (2) the existence of a real order of nature. Without the existence of a personal God, there could be no purposive entrance of God's power into the order of the world; and without the real existence of an order of nature there could be no distinction between natural events and those that are above nature—all events would be supernatural, or rather the word "supernatural" would have no meaning at all. The distinction between "natural" and "supernatural" does not mean, indeed, that nature is independent of God; it does not mean that while God brings to pass supernatural events, natural events are not brought to pass by Him. On the contrary, the believer in the supernatural regards everything that is done as being the work of God. Only, he believes that in the events called natural, God uses means, whereas in the events called supernatural He uses no means, but puts forth His creative power. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural, in other words, is simply the distinction between God's works of providence and God's work of creation; a miracle is a work of creation just as truly as the mysterious act which produced the world.

This conception of the supernatural depends absolutely upon a theistic view of God. Theism is to be distinguished (1) from deism and (2) from pantheism.

According to the deistic view, God set the world going like a machine and then left it independent of Himself. Such a view is inconsistent with the actuality of the supernatural; the miracles of the Bible presuppose a God who is constantly watching over and guiding the course of this world. The miracles of the Bible are not arbitrary intrusions of a Power that is without relation to the world, but are evidently intended to accomplish results within the order of nature. Indeed the natural and the supernatural are blended, in the miracles of the Bible, in a way entirely incongruous with the deistic conception of God. In the

⁴ Compare "*History and Faith*", 1915, pp. 6-8.

feeding of the five thousand, for example, who shall say what part the five loaves and two fishes had in the event; who shall say where the natural left off and the supernatural began? Yet that event, if any, surely transcended the order of nature. The miracles of the Bible, then, are not the work of a God who has no part in the course of nature; they are the work of a God who through His works of providence is “preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions.”

But the conception of the supernatural is inconsistent, not only with deism, but also with pantheism. Pantheism identifies God with the totality of nature. It is inconceivable, then, on the pantheistic view that anything should enter into the course of nature from outside. A similar incongruity with the supernatural appears also in certain forms of idealism, which deny real existence to the forces of nature. If what seems to be connected in nature is really only connected in the divine mind, then it is difficult to make any distinction between those operations of the divine mind which appear as miracles and those which appear as natural events. Again, it has often been said that all events are works of creation. On this view, it is only a concession to popular phraseology to say that one body is attracted toward another in accordance with a law of gravitation; what really ought to be said is that when two bodies are in proximity under certain conditions they come together. Certain phenomena in nature, on this view, are always followed by certain other phenomena, and it is really only this regularity of sequence which is indicated by the assertion that the former phenomena “cause” the latter; the only real cause is in all cases God. On the basis of this view, there can be no distinction between events wrought by the immediate power of God and those that are not; for on this view all events are so wrought. Against such a view, those who accept our definition of miracle will naturally accept the common-sense notion of cause. God is always the first cause, but there are truly second causes; and they are the means which God uses, in the ordinary course of the world, for the accomplishment of His ends. It is the exclusion of such second causes which makes an event a miracle.

It is sometimes said that the actuality of miracles would destroy the basis of science. Science, it is said, is founded upon the regularity of sequences; it assumes that if certain conditions within the course of nature are given, certain other conditions will always follow. But if there is to be any intrusion of events which by their very definition are independent of all previous conditions, then, it is said, the regularity of nature upon which science bases itself is broken up. Miracle, in other words, seems to introduce an element of arbitrariness and unaccountability into the course of the world. The objection ignores what is really fundamental in the Christian conception of miracle. According to the Christian conception, a miracle is wrought by the immediate power of God. It is not wrought by an arbitrary and fantastic despot, but by the very God to whom the regularity of nature itself is due—by the God, moreover, whose character is known through the Bible. Such a God, we may be sure, will

not do despite to the reason that He has given to His creatures; His interposition will introduce no disorder into the world that He has made. There is nothing arbitrary about a miracle, according to the Christian conception. It is not an uncaused event, but an event that is caused by the very source of all the order that is in the world. It is dependent altogether upon the least arbitrary and the most firmly fixed of all the things that are—namely upon the character of God.

The possibility of miracle, then, is indissolubly joined with “theism.” Once admit the existence of a personal God, Maker and Ruler of the world, and no limits, temporal or otherwise, can be set to the creative power of such a God. Admit that God once created the world, and you cannot deny that He might engage in creation again. But it will be said, the actuality of miracles is different from the possibility of them. It may be admitted that miracles conceivably might occur. But have they actually occurred?

This question looms very large in the minds of modern men. The burden of the question seems to rest heavily even upon many who still accept the miracles of the New Testament. The miracles used to be regarded as an aid to faith, it is often said, but now they are a hindrance to faith; faith used to come on account of the miracles, but now it comes in despite of them; men used to believe in Jesus because He wrought miracles, but now we accept the miracles because on other grounds we have come to believe in Him.

A strange confusion underlies this common way of speaking. In one sense, certainly, miracles are a hindrance to faith—but who ever thought the contrary? It may certainly be admitted that if the New Testament narrative had no miracles in it, it would be far easier to believe. The more commonplace a story is, the easier it is to accept it as true. But commonplace narratives have little value. The New Testament without the miracles would be far easier to believe. But the trouble is, it would not be worth believing. Without the miracles the New Testament would contain an account of a holy man—not a perfect man, it is true, for He was led to make lofty claims to which He had no right—but a man at least far holier than the rest of men. But of what benefit would such a man, and the death which marked His failure, be to us? The loftier be the example which Jesus set, the greater becomes our sorrow at our failure to attain to it; and the greater our hopelessness under the burden of sin. The sage of Nazareth may satisfy those who have never faced the problem of evil in their own lives; but to talk about an ideal to those who are under the thrall of sin is a cruel mockery. Yet if Jesus was merely a man like the rest of men, then an ideal is all that we have in Him. Far more is needed by a sinful world. It is small comfort to be told that there was goodness in the world, when what we need is goodness triumphant over sin. But goodness triumphant over sin involves an entrance of the creative power of God, and that creative power of God is manifested by the miracles. Without the miracles, the New Testament might be easier to believe. But the thing that would be believed would be en-

tirely different from that which presents itself to us now. Without the miracles we should have a teacher; with the miracles we have a Savior.

Certainly it is a mistake to isolate the miracles from the rest of the New Testament. It is a mistake to discuss the question of the resurrection of Jesus as though that which is to be proved were simply the resurrection of a certain man of the first century in Palestine. No doubt the existing evidence for such an event, strong as the evidence is, might be insufficient. The historian would indeed be obliged to say that no naturalistic explanation of the origin of the Church has yet been discovered, and that the evidence for the miracle is exceedingly strong; but miracles are, to say the least, extremely unusual events, and there is a tremendous hostile presumption against accepting the hypothesis of miracle in any given case. But as a matter of fact, the question in this case does not concern the resurrection of a man about whom we know nothing; it concerns the resurrection of Jesus. And Jesus was certainly a very extraordinary Person. The uniqueness of the character of Jesus removes the hostile presumption against miracle; it was extremely improbable that any ordinary man should rise from the dead, but Jesus was like no other man that ever lived.

But the evidence for the miracles of the New Testament is supported in yet another way; it is supported by the existence of an adequate occasion. It has been observed above that a miracle is an event produced by the immediate power of God, and that God is a God of order. The evidence of a miracle is therefore enormously strengthened when the purpose of the miracle can be detected. That does not mean that within a complex of miracles an exact reason must be assigned to every one; it does not mean that in the New Testament we should expect to see exactly why a miracle was wrought in one case and not in another. But it does mean that acceptance of a complex of miracles is made vastly easier when an adequate reason can be detected for the complex as a whole.

In the case of the New Testament miracles, such an adequate reason is not difficult to find. It is found in the conquest of sin. According to the Christian view, as set forth in the Bible, mankind is under the curse of God's holy law, and the dreadful penalty includes the corruption of our whole nature. Actual transgressions proceed from the sinful root, and serve to deepen every man's guilt in the sight of God. On the basis of that view, so profound, so true to the observed facts of life, it is obvious that nothing natural will meet our need. Nature transmits the dreadful taint; hope is to be sought only in a creative act of God.

And that creative act of God—so mysterious, so contrary to all expectation, yet so congruous with the character of the God who is revealed as the God of love—is found in the redeeming work of Christ. No product of sinful humanity could have redeemed humanity from the dreadful guilt or lifted a sinful race from the slough of sin. But a Savior has come from God. There lies the very root of the Christian religion; there is the reason why the supernatural is the very ground and substance of the Christian faith.

But the acceptance of the supernatural depends upon a conviction of the reality of sin. Without the conviction of sin there can be no appreciation of the uniqueness of Jesus; it is only when we contrast our sinfulness with His holiness that we appreciate the gulf which separates Him from the rest of the children of men. And without the conviction of sin there can be no understanding of the occasion for the supernatural act of God; without the conviction of sin, the good news of redemption seems to be an idle tale. So fundamental is the conviction of sin in the Christian faith that it will not do to arrive at it merely by a process of reasoning; it will not do to say merely: All men (as I have been told) are sinners; I am a man; therefore I suppose I must be a sinner too. That is all the supposed conviction of sin amounts to sometimes. But the true conviction is far more immediate than that. It depends indeed upon information that comes from without; it depends upon the revelation of the law of God; it depends upon the awful verities set forth in the Bible as to the universal sinfulness of mankind. But it adds to the revelation that has come from without a conviction of the whole mind and heart, a profound understanding of one's own lost condition, an illumination of the deadened conscience which causes a Copernican revolution in one's attitude toward the world and toward God. When a man has passed through that experience, he wonders at his former blindness. And especially does he wonder at his former attitude toward the miracles of the New Testament, and toward the supernatural Person who is there revealed. The truly penitent man glories in the supernatural, for he knows that nothing natural would meet his need; the world has been shaken once in his downfall, and shaken again it must be if he is to be saved.

Yet an acceptance of the presuppositions of miracle does not render unnecessary the plain testimony to the miracles that have actually occurred. And that testimony is exceedingly strong.⁴ The Jesus presented in the New Testament was clearly an historical Person—so much is admitted by all who have really come to grips with the historical problems at all. But just as clearly the Jesus presented in the New Testament was a super natural Person. Yet for modern liberalism a supernatural person is never historical. A problem arises then for those who adopt the liberal point of view—the Jesus of the New Testament is historical, He is supernatural, and yet what is supernatural, on the liberal hypothesis, can never be historical. The problem could be solved only by the separation of the natural from the supernatural in the New Testament account of Jesus, in order that what is supernatural might be rejected and what is natural might be retained. But the process of separation has never been successfully carried out. Many have been the attempts—the modern liberal Church has put its very heart and soul into the effort, so that there is scarcely any more brilliant chapter in the history of the human spirit than this “quest of the historical Jesus”—but all the attempts have failed. The trouble is that the miracles are found not to be an excrescence in the New Testament account of Jesus, but belong to the very warp and woof. They are intimately connected

with Jesus' lofty claims; they stand or fall with the undoubted purity of His character; they reveal the very nature of His mission in the world.

Yet miracles are rejected by the modern liberal Church, and with the miracles the entirety of the supernatural Person of our Lord. Not some miracles are rejected, but all. It is a matter of no importance whatever that some of the wonderful works of Jesus are accepted by the liberal Church; it means absolutely nothing when some of the works of healing are regarded as historical. For those works are no longer regarded by modern liberalism as supernatural, but merely as faith-cures of an extraordinary kind. And it is the presence or absence of the true supernatural which is the really important thing. Such concessions as to faith-cures, moreover, carry us at best but a very short way—disbelievers in the supernatural must simply reject as legendary or mythical the great mass of the wonderful works.

The question, then, does not concern the historicity of this miracle or that; it concerns the historicity of all miracles. That fact is often obscured, and the obscuration of it often introduces an element of something like disingenuousness into the advocacy of the liberal cause. The liberal preacher singles out some one miracle and discusses that as though it were the only point at issue. The miracle which is usually singled out is the Virgin Birth. The liberal preacher insists on the possibility of believing in Christ no matter which view be adopted as to the manner of His entrance into the world. Is not the Person the same no matter how He was born? The impression is thus produced upon the plain man that the preacher is accepting the main outlines of the New Testament account of Jesus, but merely has difficulties with this particular element in the account. But such an impression is radically false. It is true that some men have denied the Virgin Birth and yet have accepted the New Testament account of Jesus as a supernatural Person. But such men are exceedingly few and far between. It might be difficult to find a single one of any prominence living today, so profoundly and so obviously congruous is the Virgin Birth with the whole New Testament presentation of Christ. The overwhelming majority of those who reject the Virgin Birth reject also the whole supernatural content of the New Testament, and make of the "resurrection" just what the word "resurrection" most emphatically did not mean—a permanence of the influence of Jesus or a mere spiritual existence of Jesus beyond the grave. Old words may here be used, but the thing that they designate is gone. The disciples believed in the continued personal existence of Jesus even during the three sad days after the crucifixion; they were not Sadducees; they believed that Jesus lived and would rise at the last day. But what enabled them to begin the work of the Christian Church was that they believed the body of Jesus already to have been raised from the tomb by the power of God. That belief involves the acceptance of the supernatural; and the acceptance of the supernatural is thus the very heart and soul of the religion that we profess.

Whatever decision is made, the issue should certainly not be obscured. The issue does not concern individual miracles, even so important a miracle as the

Virgin Birth. It really concerns all miracles. And the question concerning all miracles is simply the question of the acceptance or rejection of the Savior that the New Testament presents. Reject the miracles and you have in Jesus the fairest flower of humanity who made such an impression upon His followers that after His death they could not believe that He had perished but experienced hallucinations in which they thought they saw Him risen from the dead; accept the miracles, and you have a Savior who came voluntarily into this world for our salvation, suffered for our sins upon the Cross, rose again from the dead by the power of God, and ever lives to make intercession for us. The difference between those two views is the difference between two totally diverse religions. It is high time that this issue should be faced; it is high time that the misleading use of traditional phrases should be abandoned and men should speak their full mind. Shall we accept the Jesus of the New Testament as our Savior, or shall we reject Him with the liberal Church?

At this point an objection may be raised. The liberal preacher, it may be said, is often ready to speak of the “deity” of Christ; he is often ready to say that “Jesus is God.” The plain man is much impressed. The preacher, he says, believes in the deity of our Lord; obviously then his unorthodoxy must concern only details; and those who object to his presence in the Church are narrow and uncharitable heresy-hunters.

But unfortunately language is valuable only as the expression of thought. The English word “God” has no particular virtue in itself; it is not more beautiful than other words. Its importance depends altogether upon the meaning which is attached to it. When, therefore, the liberal preacher says that “Jesus is God,” the significance of the utterance depends altogether upon what is meant by “God.”

And it has already been observed that when the liberal preacher uses the word “God,” he means something entirely different from that which the Christian means by the same word. God, at least according to the logical trend of modern liberalism, is not a person separate from the world, but merely the unity that pervades the world. To say, therefore, that Jesus is God means merely that the life of God, which appears in all men, appears with special clearness or richness in Jesus. Such an assertion is diametrically opposed to the Christian belief in the deity of Christ.

Equally opposed to Christian belief is another meaning that is sometimes attached to the assertion that Jesus is God. The word “God” is sometimes used to denote simply the supreme object of men’s desires, the highest thing that men know. We have given up the notion, it is said, that there is a Maker and Ruler of the universe; such notions belong to “metaphysics,” and are rejected by the modern man. But the word “God,” though it can no longer denote the Maker of the universe, is convenient as denoting the object of men’s emotions and desires. Of some men, it can be said that their God is mammon—mammon is that for which they labor, and to which their hearts are attached. In a somewhat similar way, the liberal preacher says that Jesus is God. He does

not mean at all to say that Jesus is identical in nature with a Maker and Ruler of the universe, of whom an idea could be obtained apart from Jesus. In such a Being he no longer believes. All that he means is that the man Jesus—a man here in the midst of us, and of the same nature as ours—is the highest thing we know. It is obvious that such a way of thinking is far more widely removed from Christian belief than is Unitarianism, at least the earlier forms of Unitarianism. For the early Unitarianism no doubt at least believed in God. The modern liberals, on the other hand, say that Jesus is God not because they think high of Jesus, but because they think desperately low of God.

In another way also, liberalism within the “evangelical” churches is inferior to Unitarianism. It is inferior to Unitarianism in the matter of honesty. In order to maintain themselves in the evangelical churches and quiet the fears of their conservative associates, the liberals resort constantly to a double use of language. A young man, for example, has received disquieting reports of the unorthodoxy of a prominent preacher. Interrogating the preacher as to his belief, he receives a reassuring reply. “You may tell everyone,” says the liberal preacher in effect, “that I believe that Jesus is God.” The inquirer goes away much impressed.

It may well be doubted, however, whether the assertion, “I believe that Jesus is God,” or the like, on the lips of liberal preachers, is strictly truthful. The liberal preacher attaches indeed a real meaning to the words, and that meaning is very dear to his heart. He really does believe that “Jesus is God.” But the trouble is that he attaches to the words a different meaning from that which is attached to them by the simple-minded person to whom he is speaking. He offends, therefore, against the fundamental principle of truthfulness in language. According to that fundamental principle, language is truthful, not when the meaning attached to the words by the speaker, but when the meaning intended to be produced in the mind of the particular person addressed, is in accordance with the facts. Thus the truthfulness of the assertion, “I believe that Jesus is God,” depends upon the audience that is addressed. If the audience is composed of theologically trained persons, who will attach the same meaning to the word “God” as that which the speaker attaches to it, then the language is truthful. But if the audience is composed of old-fashioned Christians, who have never attached anything but the old meaning to the word “God” (the meaning which appears in the first verse of Genesis), then the language is untruthful. And in the latter case, not all the pious motives in the world will make the utterance right. Christian ethics do not abrogate common honesty; no possible desire of edifying the Church and of avoiding offence can excuse a lie.

At any rate, the deity of our Lord, in any real sense of the word “deity,” is of course denied by modern liberalism. According to the modern liberal Church, Jesus differs from the rest of men only in degree and not in kind; He can be divine only if all men are divine. But if the liberal conception of the

deity of Christ thus becomes meaningless, what is the Christian conception? What does the Christian man mean when he confesses that "Jesus is God"?

The answer has been given in what has already been said. It has already been observed that the New Testament represents Jesus as a supernatural Person. But if Jesus is a supernatural Person He is either divine or else He is an intermediate Being, higher indeed than man, but lower than God. The latter view has been abandoned for many centuries in the Christian Church, and there is not much likelihood that it will be revived; Arianism certainly is dead. The thought of Christ as a super-angelic Being, like God but not God, belongs evidently to pagan mythology, and not to the Bible or to Christian faith. It will usually be admitted, if the theistic conception of the separateness between man and God be held, that Christ is either God or else simply man; He is certainly not a Being intermediate between God and man. If, then, He is not merely man, but a supernatural Person, the conclusion is that He is God.

In the second place, it has already been observed that in the New Testament and in all true Christianity, Jesus is no mere example for faith, but the object of faith. And the faith of which Jesus is the object is clearly religious faith; the Christian man reposes confidence in Jesus in a way that would be out of place in the case of any other than God. It is no lesser thing that is committed to Jesus, but the eternal welfare of the soul. The entire Christian attitude toward Jesus as it is found throughout the New Testament presupposes clearly, then, the deity of our Lord.

It is in the light of this central presupposition that the individual assertions ought to be approached. The individual passages which attest the deity of Christ are not excrescences in the New Testament, but natural fruits of a fundamental conception which is everywhere the same. Those individual passages are not confined to any one book or group of books. In the Pauline Epistles, of course, the passages are particularly plain; the Christ of the Epistles appears again and again as associated only with the Father and with His Spirit. In the Gospel of John, also, one does not have to seek very long; the deity of Christ is almost the theme of the book. But the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels is not really different from that which appears everywhere else. The way in which Jesus speaks of my Father and the Son—for example, in the famous passage in Matt. xi. 27 (Lk. x. 22): "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him"—this manner of presenting Jesus' relation to the Father, absolutely fundamental in the Synoptic Gospels, involves the assertion of the deity of our Lord. The Person who so speaks is represented as being in mysterious union with the eternal God.

Yet the New Testament with equal clearness presents Jesus as a man. The Gospel of John, which contains at the beginning the stupendous utterance, "The Word was God," and dwells constantly upon the deity of the Lord, also represents Jesus as weary at the hell and as thirst, in the hour of agony on the

Cross. Scarcely in the Synoptic Gospels can one discover such drastic touches attesting the humanity of our Savior as those which appear again and again in the Gospel of John. With regard to the Synoptic Gospels, of course there can be no debate; the Synoptists clearly present a Person who lived a genuine human life and was Himself true man.

The truth is, the witness of the New Testament is everywhere the same; the New Testament everywhere presents One who was both God and man. And it is interesting to observe how unsuccessful have been all the efforts to reject one part of this witness and retain the rest. The Apollinarians rejected the full humanity of the Lord, but in doing so they obtained a Person who was very different from the Jesus of the New Testament. The Jesus of the New Testament was clearly, in the full sense, a man. Others seem to have supposed that the divine and the human were so blended in Jesus that there was produced a nature neither purely divine nor purely human, but a *tertium quid*. But nothing could be more remote from the New Testament teaching than that. According to the New Testament the divine and human natures were clearly distinct; the divine nature was pure divinity, and the human nature was pure humanity; Jesus was God and man in two distinct natures. The Nestorians, on the other hand, who emphasized the distinctness of divine and human in Jesus as to suppose that there were in Jesus two separate persons. But such a Gnosticizing view is plainly contrary to the record; the New Testament plainly teaches the unity of the Person of our Lord.

By elimination of these errors the Church arrived at the New Testament doctrine of two natures in one Person; the Jesus of the New Testament is “God and man, in two distinct natures, and one Person forever.” That doctrine is sometimes regarded as speculative. But nothing could be further from the fact. Whether the doctrine of the two natures is true or false, it was certainly produced not by speculation, but by an attempt to summarize, succinctly and exactly, the Scriptural teaching.

This doctrine is of course rejected by modern liberalism. And it is rejected in a very simple way—by the elimination of the whole higher nature of our Lord. But such radicalism is not a bit more successful than the heresies of the past. The Jesus who is supposed to be left after the elimination of the supernatural element is at best a very shadowy figure; for the elimination of the supernatural logically involves the elimination of much that remains, and the historian constantly approaches the absurd view which effaces Jesus altogether from the pages of history. But even after such dangers have been avoided, even after the historian, by setting arbitrary limits to his process of elimination, has succeeded in reconstructing a purely human Jesus, the Jesus thus constructed is found to be entirely unreal. He has a moral contradiction at the very center of His being—a contradiction due to His Messianic consciousness. He was pure and humble and strong and sane, yet He supposed, without basis in fact, that He was to be the final Judge of all the earth! The liberal Jesus, despite all the efforts of modern psychological reconstruction to galvanize Him

into life, remains a manufactured figure of the stage. Very different is the Jesus of the New Testament and of the great Scriptural creeds. That Jesus is indeed mysterious. Who can fathom the mystery of His Person? But the mystery is a mystery in which a man can rest. The Jesus of the New Testament has at least one advantage over the Jesus of modern reconstruction—He is real. He is not a manufactured figure suitable as a point of support for ethical maxims, but a genuine Person whom a man can love. Men have loved Him through all the Christian centuries. And the strange thing is that despite all the efforts to remove Him from the pages of history, there are those who love Him still.