

1915

# The apologetic value of the character of Christ as presented in the gospels

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"THE APOLOGETIC VALUE OF THE CHARACTER  
OF CHRIST AS PRESENTED IN THE  
GOSPELS."

(Graduating Thesis)

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### Introduction

The question which Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?", has been a question which has been ringing in the ears of all seriously minded people ever since. One cannot go very far into theological or philosophical thought without meeting this question face to face. One cannot look very far or observe very closely into the practical affairs of life without confronting it again. We describe the situation quite accurately when we say that this question is "all and in all".

For some time, however, the question did not have the appearance of a problem. The early church was quite satisfied with the mere statement that Christ was both the Son of God, and the Son of Man, without prying into the question as to how this could be. But this loose state of affairs was not destined to go on unmolested very long, especially since Greek philosophy was beginning to storm the walls of Jewish tradition. Heresies arose in the church. The fundamental catholic doctrines were being undermined, and some formal doctrinal statements became increasingly

necessary, especially concerning the doctrine of the Person of Christ. The Ebionites, in denying the divinity of Christ, furnished the occasion to assert His divine nature, and the Gnostics, who denied the reality of the flesh of Christ, and the reality of His union with the flesh, gave the occasion to emphasize His humanity.

The problem of interpreting Christ was now under way. We see the Monarchists, who affirmed that God was one; we see the two forms of this movement, one headed by Paul of Samosata, who urged that Christ was merely a human being peculiarly endowed with grace and power by the Holy Spirit, and the other by Sabellius, who held that Christ was but the incarnation of the unipersonal God, the only Trinity being a Trinity of manifestations. Again we see the preeminence of the problem of Christ's Person in the Arian controversy. The Arians denied that Christ had a rational human soul, and charged the Catholic party with substituting two persons for the single Christ. The council of Nicea, 325 A.D., put a ban upon this movement. Under John of Damascus, the human element in Christ was made subordinate. According to him, the human nature of Christ never had any personality of its own. In the God-man

the pre-existing Logos supplied the element of person-ality. Others held to a theory of adoption, which claimed that Christ, as regarding His human nature, was not naturally the Son of God, and in order to become the Son of God in respect to this nature, must be adopted. Following this movement, Latin theology allowed the human Jesus to fall into the background as compared to the divine Jesus, which may have some causal connection with the rise of the worship of the Virgin and of Saints. Then came the so-called communicatio idiomatum doctrine, which held that the human nature of Christ received the divine predicates.

Luther held to this doctrine. The occasion for his statements on Christology lay in the real bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Being under pressure to explain how the body of Christ could be at the right hand of God and at the same time in many places upon the earth, he taught that the right hand of God did not imply locality, but a state of supreme majesty and power, and then he went on to say that by virtue of the union of the two natures in Christ, ubiquity is imparted to the body of Christ.

Kant held that Christ was simply the moral ideal. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel held that Christ was the

highest historical realization of the essential union of God and man. For Schleiermacher, Christ was the "transcendent example of a perfect God-consciousness, the impersonated divine life, the bond and center of spiritual fellowship". Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus*, spent most of his time in arguing that it is impossible to prove that we have a real history of Christ, and from that drew the conclusion that we should be more interested in the ideal of humanity which He presents than in His Person. Renan praised Christ very highly, then added statements which challenged His intellectual and ethical superiority. Schenkel and Keim said that Christ was a Pattern of a sinless humanity, "a pure mirror in which the divine verities found reflection". But they were so opposed to the miraculous that they ended by making Christ, not the "word made flesh", but a sort of divine legate.

In recent years, the problem of the interpretation of Christ has been wrestled with even more arduously than previously. Christ now occupies a central place in theology. Theology, today, may be termed Christo-centric. One element in the question in which the present has not been equalled by any previous age, is the appreciative considerations of



Christ's human perfection.

Bishop McConnell, in the article on "Recent Discussions on the Person of Christ", Methodist Review, January, 1915, sums up the present status of the question: Prof. W.B. Smith, of Tulane University, affirms that Jesus is but the result of certain myth-making tendencies in the early Christian church. Prof. Conny-beare, of Cambridge, refutes this view by saying that he who accounts for Jesus in this way is not skilled in the use of the historical method. Yet he does not leave much place to Jesus. President Eliot, of Harvard, and Dr. Pritchett, of the Carnegie Foundation, approach the problem by saying that we must strip off every vestige of dogma, every assumption out of harmony with the modern scientific view of the world, and take the teachings of Jesus reduced to their net historical minimum. The difficulty with this is, that if you take away what the orthodox church has held about Him, as based upon the Scripture, you have little left of Him. The Pragmatic approach is very common today. It has no interest in the historical Jesus, but in what influence the conception of Jesus has had, and what it is worth today apart from its origin. The truth in this approach lies in the fact that the spiritual

worth of truth lies in its serviceableness. Prof.

Bacon, of Yale, attacks the Pragmatic position and claims that Christianity depends upon the historical Jesus because we must have an authentic revelation of God as well as of man. The distinctive message of Christianity has been that God, in some way, at great cost, uniquely entered into the burdens and limitations of human experience through Jesus Christ.

Practically and vitally, people are making more of Christ today than they are theologically and theoretically. While that is wholesome in many respects, yet we will not be satisfied to remain there long. Already there are signs of attempts to restate the problem. Some are endeavoring to find a basis of the doctrine of Christ's Person in modern psychology. Father Tyrrell argues, that as some personalities have great power over others, so the Divine Spirit had such control over Jesus as to cause Him to lose His individuality. The objection to this view is that instances of the power of one person over another are best seen in hypnotism where the lower phases of the psychological mechanism are captured, and there is no demonstration of a large range of thought and vision as is true in Jesus. Dr. Sanday puts a subliminal self in

Christ, and states that here is the seat of the divine. That doesn't relieve the problem, for we have a subconscious self in ourselves and we are beginning to see that what is subconscious was once in consciousness. Again the marvel of Christ's consciousness is what we see above the threshold of His subconsciousness.

Again there are those working at a restatement of the Kenosis doctrine. The chief advocates of this doctrine in the past were Thomasius, Gess, Ebrard, Delitzsch and Martensen. These men were more of the radical type. Men who more recently have been working at a restatement of the Kenosis doctrine are Bowne, MacIntosh and Forsyth. The difficulty with this theory, according to Bishop McConnell, is that it presupposes too intimate a knowledge of the inner constitution of deity.

There is another attempt to restate the problem in an essay by Dr. William Temple on "The Divinity of Christ". He sees that in the problem there must be a real revelation which is bound up to redemption and therefore Christ must have a consciousness, human in form but divine in content. He must be, at the same time, both God and man. The criticism of this theory is that he puts the emphasis on the contents of Christ's

mind as revealing His divinity. Not enough is said of the constitution of His mind itself. "When we think of contents we must think of the container".

The speculation of the future, according to Bishop McConnell, will probably lie between the Kenotic and Templian theories. The virtue of the Kenotic theory is that it implies the self-sacrifice of God. The virtue of the Templian theory lies in the fact that it keeps within the recognized limits of thought. The two theories ought to be combined.

Thus we see that the problem of the Person of Christ has been, and is of very great importance. The problem seems to be continually pushing itself to the front for recognition. This is due to two things largely: In the first place, we have a fact to interpret. Whether we hold to the Christ of history or to the Christ of faith, or to both, we have the fact of Christ to interpret. The persistency of this fact for recognition, were it in the jurisdiction of this discussion, might possibly come in as an evidence for a proof of the verity of the Christian revelation. That the problem is ever before us is due, in the second place, to Christ's importance and place. The Christian religion is organized around a Person, and that Person

is Christ. Christianity stands or falls with Christ. Christ is so woven into the fabric of our life that it would be practically an impossibility to eliminate Him. "To abstract Christ", says Dr. Gordon, "from our civilization, would be to take the sun out of the heavens, the soul out of the body. What we should have left would be a frozen humanity, a dead symbol with the reality forever gone.....I venture the statement that it is almost as impossible to think of God and man and human society through any other medium than Christ, as it is to look up at the stars, or abroad upon the earth, in any other way than through the world's unfolding atmosphere". So long as this is true we are under compulsion to work on the problem.

The aim of this thesis is not to enter into the metaphysical problems of Christ's nature and relation to the God-head. We wish, however, just to take the character of Christ as presented in the Gospels and note its possible bearing upon His divinity, upon the authority and proof of the Bible, and upon the proper interpretation of the miraculous element found in the Gospels. We do not claim to be able to prove conclusively from this standpoint that Christ was divine, but only hope to show that the Character, as presented in

the Gospels, has features which forbid His possible human classification, and, therefore, the only alternative is to affirm His divinity. We must begin our investigation with the presupposition that the Gospel record is true, but we hope, by a careful analysis of its contents, to substantiate our presupposition. We wish to point out that the so-called miraculous element recorded in the Gospels, is not incongruous with the Person whose remarkable character is delineated therein; that His incarnation is as miraculous as either His supernatural conception or His Resurrection, and that His power to perform miracles is consistent with His unique character.

If we can but keep this perspective, we believe that we have eliminated a host of baffling problems, and that a proper treatment of the subject matter from this new point ought to be of great practical value, both to skilled and to unskilled minds. Christ is the center about which many of our problems radiate, and there is a great truth in Browning's statement: "I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ accepted by thy reason, solves for thee, all questions in the earth and out of it".

It is to be seen that these considerations have

a bearing upon each other and there must, of necessity, be some overlapping of subject matter, for the same features of Christ's character which argue for the authenticity of the Gospel narratives and the authority of the Bible, also are considerations which afford grounds for postulating His divinity, and vice versa.

## I

The testimony of the Character of Christ, as  
presented in the Gospels, to His divinity.

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## A.

His project and His attack.

## 1. Remarkable features of His project.

a. Jesus Christ sets out to establish the Kingdom of God among men. It is a spiritual relation among men, centered in Himself, a brotherhood of lovers, each loving as He had loved. His great ambition was "to re-create the human race and restore it to God, in the unity of a spiritual Kingdom".

b. It was a Kingdom that took precedence of all human ties, even the closest. There is no time to bury the dead nor to bid farewell to those at home. It is so far above ordinary human ties that, should occasion demand it, one should even hate his intimate and immediate relations for the Kingdom's sake. Yet, the fundamental institutions of society are not destroyed, but enhanced and more firmly established under His regime.

c. It is remarkable in that it includes all classes and all sects. It has no sexual limitations; it includes all ages; physical and unusual mental equipments are not essential; material possessions and



social standing are not requirements of the Kingdom, but, if anything, barriers. Jesus was found in the Temple at one time, in the market place at another; now in the synagogue, then at the seashore. He stands; He visits the haunts of outcasts and harlots; He is a genial guest at a feast and wedding; He is a prominent factor at funerals. His Kingdom includes all people of all classes.

d. It is a remarkable project in that the test is that of a child-like spirit. Except one turns and becomes as a child, he cannot enter into the Kingdom. The natural and human way would have been to make the test a virile spirit.

e. Christ offered no meretricious inducements to anyone entering the Kingdom. In fact, He told the candidates for entrance just what probably awaited them. They would be scorned, reproached, and persecuted. They were not to receive, but to give what they had and were in service. The joy that awaited them would be the joy of service and of a new heart.

f. His plans were immense and revolutionary. There was to come to pass a freedom which the world had not heard of before. It was freedom through the truth, and this truth and this freedom centered in Him. He

proposed to give to men an abundant life here, and eternal life to come; He was the light of this new world, and men would be saved through Him; His Kingdom was not of this world, but above this world; to enter the Kingdom, and remain therein, men must love each other, serve each other, and live together in peace and brotherhood; they must esteem others better than themselves. Christ was charged with being unfriendly to Caesar, and His teachings applied were so revolutionary as to make the charge true.

g. His Kingdom covered ages of time. This life was but a temporary eclipse of an eternal shining. He said His story would be told in strange lands in strange tongues. His project was to grow even after His death; it was as a grain of mustard seed, which was to grow into a tree of magnificent proportions; a thousand years for Jesus were only as a day; He intended to build a church on Peter's confession that the gates of Hades would not be able to prevail against; Mary's anointing would be told through the ages as a memorial of her. Such an attitude of certainty passes beyond the confidence of human individuals in their projects.

h. His project was original. Dr. Wendling, in his

"Man of Galilee", cites the following points of originality; Jesus claimed to be a perfect teacher; He claimed to set a perfect example; He contended that He was sinless; He urged that all should love and obey Him; He affirmed that no other could work such miracles; He said that He was the fulfillment of prophecy; He stated that He would rise from the dead; He proposed to set the world right, not only by His life and teachings, but also by His death; He gave to men an original conception of God; He announced that He would be the final Judge. He argued that He knew all about God and the other world; He proved that He could give to men a potent help in attempting to live the higher life; He was original in claiming to have power to forgive sin; He stood above Mosaic legislation as the Supreme Lawyer of all ages; "A new law give I unto you".

If we make a review of all other great men, statesmen, heroes, lawgivers, kings, philosophers and prophets, we shall find that however original they were, yet their training, environment, and others foundations affected them to a greater extent than in the case of Jesus. No other could transcend his ties, not even Socrates, and become free and universal like Christ.

When we consider, therefore, the remarkable

features of Christ's project, we are led to believe that it was not the project of a mere man. "Consider then the reach of this undertaking; which, if He was only a man, shows Him to have been the most extravagant and even wildest of all human enthusiasts".

(Bushnell-"The Character of Christ"-page 34).

## 2. The apparent presumption of His project.

a. It must have seemed the height of presumption to those who knew about His life when Christ made such a claim as He did. His countrymen knew Him only as an uneducated villager. He even was from Nazareth, a town which did not seem to be favored with much of a reputation, except for evil. Jesus' parents were common folk, engaged in a common work. Jesus certainly had little opportunity for schooling, and it is known that He worked at the carpenter's bench until thirty years of age. Such an unsuspecting youth as this, coming before the public, proposing to readjust the relations between God and man, must have been the subject of much laughter. But yet we find them astonished at His insight, though they knew He had never learned through the ordinary processes. There came a time when they realized that He spoke with authority.

With such an environment, and such an opportunity, it is incredible that He could have launched such a scheme and could have started it going without positing His divinity.

b. Consider also how unlike human nature when He chose His disciples and assistants. Common prudence would seem to say, choose those of influence, standing and education. But Christ overlooked the trained and influential men, and was glad not to be hampered by them. Eleven of the disciples were from the province where no prophet was to be expected; all of them were common folk, with little in them to commend. Jesus saw in them the needed qualifications; gave them the keys of the Kingdom, and even power to forgive sin. Not only did He choose these apparently unqualified men, but He spent most of His time with the lower classes. His presumption went almost to the limit of madness in these choices, unless we say He was divine and could see deeper and broader than man.

c. He used great boldness and showed the certainty of one who had divine insight when He launched His entire scheme at the outset with no tentative statements to try and test the popular mind on the subject. He proclaimed it, and it underwent no change. "Had He been

merely a 'great man', He would have been more prudent; He would have conditioned His design; He would have tested it; He would have developed it gradually; He would have made trial of its working power; and then He would have refashioned, or contracted, or expanded it before finally proposing it to the consideration of the world. There is no proof, no distant intimation of a change, or of a modification of His plan".  
 (Liddon-"The Divinity of <sup>Christ</sup> Our Lord").

d. It was certainly audacious for one to claim that His plans were universal in their scope. "He spoke as a being related to the whole human race: a narrower sphere than the world never enters His thoughts". ("Channing's Sermon-"The Character of Christ"). He came to save the whole world, though He had no map even of the world; He claimed to have other sheep which were not of this fold. He can't be accounted for on the human plane; that such a person from such a quarter could herald such a program, that has worked so well, is incredible unless He be divine. "In His age, Jesus stands alone; there are no conditions of ancestry or circumstance that can possibly account for Him. All men, either in their rational endowments, or in their moral character, or in both, transcend time;

but Jesus transcends all time. His thought, after two thousand years, needs no revision. His conception of God, of man, and human society are ultimate conceptions; intellectual power can never go beyond them, can never even master their entire content. His spirit has upon it the mark of finality. His character is the full impression upon humanity of the moral perfection of the Deity". (Gordon-"The Christ of Today"). "No human creature sits quietly down to a perpetual project, one that proposes to be executed only at the end, or final harvest of the world. That is not human, but divine". (Bushnell-"The Character of Christ"-page 39).

### 3. Jesus, the Supreme Teacher.

a. He exemplified what He taught. Here was the secret of His power, both with those whom He met in ordinary social ways, and with the disciples. He was the example and influence of a Perfect Life. He was Himself the ideal that He sought to teach. "I am the way, the truth, the life". He urged that those that beheld Him beheld the Father. He knew what He was talking about by experience, which must have lent to His deep conviction.

b. Jesus always dealt with essentials. He never moved upon the surface of things; He always grasped the

underlying principles clearly. "He seems to have aimed at the greatest clearness in the briefest compass".

c. Jesus always found the point of contact. He never talked over people's heads, in the sense that they didn't understand what He was attempting to explain to their cramped minds. He has never been equalled in His ability to impart spiritual ideas to dull, ignorant and prejudiced minds. He found this point of contact by using illustrations with which His hearers were familiar. Consider that He was dealing largely with a people who knew about the things of nature, and the land, and then notice His figures; He uses birds--lilies--ripe corn--flowers--ploughman sowing seed--lost sheep--lost coin--cup and platter--lamp and candlestick--foxes and sheepfolds--meal and leaven--hen and chickens, doves and sparrows--fish and bread--eggs and serpents, wheat and oil--oxen and lambs--dogs and swine--rocks and sand--rain and wind--white harvest fields--red sunsets and lowering skies.

Besides this art of illustration, He was a wonderful story teller, and an expert questioner, and frequently taught by object lessons.

d. He had the knowledge to be an ideal Teacher.



He knew the truth, and He knew men. He was never at a loss as to what to say, or how to say it. He seems to always approach men in the proper way; He was quick to discern the needs of the selfrighteous, the sinful, and doubters; and had the insight to treat each one according to his temperament. We cannot discover that He used the hit-or-miss method, hoping that some seed would fall upon good ground; He knew His man and aimed at His mark.

e. He was the ideal Teacher because He got His knowledge from the proper source - from God Himself. His was a life of filial relationship with the Father; He lived always in the Father's presence, and in such a way as to be susceptible to God's will. "It was from this source - this perfect filial relation -that He drew His strength that kept Him sinless, and the truth that He taught with the freedom and authority of perfect inward conviction. And this source of life and truth, let it never be forgotten, is the deepest need of every man that would teach another".

(Weigle-"The Pupil and the Teacher"-page 216)

f. Lastly, He had the necessary faith in God and man to make Him an ideal Teacher. He saw the possibilities in even the lowest. He had faith in His work,

and never doubted that He would win. To show this faith, He not only said the things which He said, but gave His life for men. A lesser teacher would have desired to live longer and teach more, but Jesus only taught three years and then put the work on the shoulders of the unlearned disciples. Here is an example of gigantic faith in man.

4. He was never anxious about the success of His project.

He was never anxious. There is no evidence that Jesus ever doubted that He would win. He was sure of His ground and then proceeded with a conviction and an unconquerable determination.

"He speaks as one who is sure of the compactness and faultlessness of His design. He is certain that no human obstacle can balk its realization. He produces it simply, without effort, without reserve, without exaggeration. He is calm because He is in possession of the future, and sees His way clearly through its tangled maze". (Liddon-"The Divinity of <sup>Christ</sup> Our Lord").

"His disciples tell Him that the most powerful class in the nation are offended at Him; it gives Him no uneasiness. His statement of His doctrine proves distasteful; He does not modify it to make it acceptable; He seems, at times, even to accentuate its

"objectionable features, regardless of the effect of such a course upon His popularity, or upon the number of His followers, and with the purpose of repelling those who had no sympathy with Him, or with the life of Spirit.....Fully conscious that the world is against Him, scoffed at, despised, hated, alone, too, in His cause, and without partisans that had any public influence, no man has ever been able to detect in Him the least anxiety for the final success of His doctrine". (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus")

This is not the way of man.

5. He was approachable, but transcendent.

Jesus was known as a man of sympathy and love. Those in need did not hesitate to seek Him out; they were determined to see Him, though others would keep them back. The leper, the deformed, the unfortunate, and the fallen and sinful found in Him a Sympathizer and a true Friend. But, on the other hand, He far transcended all of His associates. His independent spirit was first shown when He was a lad in the Temple. Later, it was shown when He hypothetically asked "Who is my mother, my brother, my sister?" We cannot find that He ever took time to take care lest He be misunderstood. We do not discover that He ever asked advice.

He never asked anyone's opinion of Himself except Peter, and that was to teach him a great truth. He never bade anyone to pray for Him, but, instead, urged that they pray for their own self-keeping. He was not offended by social prejudices of the day. At a time when He was not in serious disfavor, He encouraged criticism by calling Matthew the publican, by eating with a publican, by His attitude towards the woman in the home of Simon the Pharisee. "Who was this independent man who felt able to ignore the opinions of men about Him; who slighted the most cherished traditions; and over-rode the social prejudices of classes which looked down upon Him as a peasant, and His followers as despicable and boorish? He had no wealth, no political authority, no military support; He was a youth without name, without family position, but He looked down upon all the petty conventional movement of the day, and treated it, and the petty, conventional men who moved in it, as their Master". (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus")

6. Jesus never fluctuated.

He was self-possessed even when His conduct was challenged. He was never caught off guard, never vexed, never irritated, never disconcerted; He said or did nothing which would show Him to be other than

He claimed. He never retracted anything He said, even though He talked extemporaneously; He was often pressed, but never let slip any exaggerations or misstatements. He was able to turn every occurrence to some spiritual purpose effectively, without moralizing. He was never surprised, except at the dullness of His disciples, and at the hardness of heart of those who should believe. He made no alterations in His plans or purposes; no circumstance could arise to which His plan could not be adjusted. He does not seem to have ever been discouraged and cast down. "In all the history of His life we are not able to detect the faintest indication that He slips or falters, and this is the more remarkable, that He is prosecuting so great a work, with so great enthusiasm; counting it His meat and drink, and pouring into it all the energies of His life. For when men have great works on hand, their very enthusiasm runs to impatience.....A kind of sacred patience invests Him everywhere. Having no element of crude will mixed with His work, he is able, in all trial and opposition, to hold a condition of serenity above the clouds, and let them sail under Him without ever obscuring the sun. He is poor, and hungry, and weary, and despised, insulted by his enemies, deserted by his friends, but never dis-

heartened, never fretted or ruffled". (Bushnell-"The Character of Christ"-pages 29,30)

Why should He fluctuate? He knew that His plan, and all of the conditions under which it was to be worked out, were in God's hands. Time had no power over Him: "It could bring no stage in His plan's developments too soon, and could unduly retard none". "And this confident, composed man was not old and experienced, sobered by the remembrance of many errors, and calm with the tranquility which old age brings. He was little more than a youth, preaching His movement alone, unsupported by the great, or the rich of the nation, and doomed, as He well knew, to a hideous and ignominious death". (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus")

Certainly He must have had the stability of the divine within Him, to present such a noble illustration of complete triumph over the things of the earth.

7. Jesus showed Himself to be a true leader of men, using extraordinary insight. He stayed with His men, shared their labors and hardships, and taught them by example as well as by word. He kept these with Him until they were ready to assume the responsibility of extending the Kingdom.

His shrewd insight as a leader and commander is

pointed out in R.E.Thompson's Sermon on "The Sending out of the Apostles Two by Two". He knows His men so well that He sends them out in pairs such that the shortcomings of one are the strength of the other. Thus Peter, who is facile, impulsive, and outspoken, is coupled with Andrew, the calm, conservative, and cautious; James, who is elderly and sober, is accompanied by John, who is bright, lightfooted and lovable; Philip, the slow-witted, heavy, honest-hearted, is paired with Nathanael, the quick-minded and alert Bartholomew; Thomas, the careful, conscientious, scrupulous, clearheaded, went with the fearless, unquestioning Matthew; James, the stern, uncompromising man of conduct and morals, impatient at fruitless faith, is coupled with the definite, sharp, clear-cut man of practice and faith, Thaddeus, or Judas, not Iscariot; Simon, the Zealot, who counted Christ all and served Him with zeal, is placed with the cold, calculating, commercial, and selfish Judas Iscariot.

If true insight into men counts anything for the divinity of Jesus, certainly we see it clearly manifested in the Jesus of the Gospels.

8. Once more we see an example of perfect selflessness in Jesus as He sets about to inaugurate His Kingdom.

It is difficult for men to leave self out of the issue, but Jesus was able to accomplish this. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He surrendered His home and friends to become a wanderer; He avoided all popularity, silencing those who were healed, concealing His identity when possible, taking His disciples to the desert to avoid the crowd. He never minded personal lack; He left His place of rest when He saw the multitudes without a shepherd; so thoughtless of self was He, that His friends thought Him mentally deranged; He defined Himself as a servant and minister.

"We see Him among the thousands of Galilee, anointed of God with the Holy Ghost and with power, going about doing good, with no pride of birth, though He was a King; with no pride of intellect, though omniscience dwelt within Him; with no pride of power, though all power in heaven and in earth was in His hands; or of station, though the fullness of <sup>the</sup> Godhead abode in Him bodily; or of superior goodness or holiness; but in lowliness of mind esteeming every other better than Himself, healing the sick, casting out devils, feeding the hungry, and everywhere breaking to men the bread of life". "He freely gave Himself in



a service that demanded and ended only with His death. He fulfilled thus the end of His life, and bore evidence of His origin from God, the Divine Unselfishness; the royal Giver" (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus").

Thus we see that His project, and His attack upon it to accomplish it, point to His origin in God. It is above human comprehension, to say nothing of realization, yet the Nazarene did both. Surely, He must be the Christ, the Son of God.

#### B.

#### Union in Christ of contrasted and remarkable qualities.

The character of Christ, as presented in the Gospels, is unique in that contrasted <sup>and remarkable</sup> qualities are brought together in a union which makes His being classed merely as a man, highly improbable.

##### 1. Egoism and humility.

The character of Christ presents a remarkable union of egoism and humility. The pretensions of Christ concerning Himself are astonishing. "Similar pretensions have sometimes been assumed by maniacs, or insane persons, but never, so far as I know, by persons in the proper exercise of their reason. Certain it is that

no mere man could take the same attitude of supremacy towards the race, and inherent affinity or oneness with God, without fatally shocking the confidence of the world by his effrontery".(Bushnell-"Character of Christ"-pages 22,23).

Here is a list of His statements concerning Himself: I am the Light - the Way - the Truth - the Vine - the Life - Ask in My name - I will rise from the dead - eat my body, drink my blood - Keep my commandments - I am the Resurrection - I am from above - I came down from heaven - Before Abraham was, I am - All power is given to me - I am greater than the temple - I am Lord of the Sabbath - a greater than Solomon is here - He that hath seen me hath seen the Father - Come unto me - Ye call me Master and Lord and ye say well for so I am - No man can come to the Father but by Me - I will draw all men unto me - My words shall not pass away - He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.--Did anyone ever dare to make such preposterous assertions? Jesus did, and for the most part, it wasn't considered as out of the way, for He combined with His egoism, a sublime humility. He spent His childhood in subjection to His parents; He kept Himself in obscurity until

the appointed time; He rejected all show and ostentation. He, early in His ministry, determined that His power should not be used for display or to satisfy curiosity; He felt that He was upon a mission from above, and He could do nothing of Himself but through the Father that dwelleth in Him. When the people wanted to make Him king, He went and hid Himself.

Thus we have astonishing pretensions on the one hand, and a humility on the other which offsets it, and constitutes a balance of contrasted qualities which is unique.

## 2. Independence and dependence.

Consider again the union in His person of independence and a sense of dependence. He put Himself above the Law, above the Sabbath, and above the Temple. He hit the Ecclesiastics of His day with a scorching criticism and exposure of their hypocrisy. There is no intimation that He ever asked any information for His own benefit from any one. He was independent of the voice of the multitude; independent of the enthusiasm and prompting of the disciples; independent even when face to face with the bitter criticisms and scorn of His antagonists; independent of all, save God and His conscience. He always appeared in the role as one who gave,

rather than one that received. We have no evidence that He ever used external means to accomplish His purposes. In contrast to this He bears the spirit of dependence; He craves the love and sympathy of those about Him; He seems to have had His intimate associates; He rejoiced in the submission of the sinning woman; He desired to eat the Passover with the disciples; He wanted them with Him in the Garden; His whole attitude shows His sense of dependence upon God; He came to do the will of Him that sent Him; He was obedient unto death, yea the death of the Cross. The union of such contrasted qualities in man, in any degree, is rare, but in the degree in which we find it in Christ, it is unique.

### 3. Depth of insight and simplicity.

Consider His depth of insight combined with His amazing simplicity. Truth seems to be His by intuition. He comprehends without any seeming conscious effort; in fact, He seems to be destitute of the logical faculty. His statements appear to be revelations and not the result of reasoning. He sees the principles involved at a glance and proceeds immediately from the heart of the matter. He never has any doubt or uncertainty, never conjectures, seems to be devoid

of the sense of mystery in the presence of the Infinite; He has no intellectual curiosity, but intuitively speaks authoritatively. He seems never to have been surprised, never entertained suspicions, never took council nor deliberated with Himself, nor was He ever hurried. He made no mistakes nor errors, and always did the right thing at the right time. He showed great comprehensiveness. We have no record that He even said a needless thing, but His statements have passed on and on, and have ever unfolded new meaning. He exhausted each subject at a single stroke. The Lord's prayer contains but sixty-five words, yet in it He gave the essence of every utterance possible to a man in prayer. He possessed the power of foresight, stating beforehand, quite precisely, the time and circumstances of His terrible death. He contended that an act of a certain woman would be told as a memorial of her. He affirmed that if He be lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him.

Coupled with this insight is a remarkable simplicity. His beautiful figures and analogies have already been listed. He accommodated Himself to all classes of minds, because He spoke straightforward to men's convictions without any logical process which

uncultured minds could not follow. No other teacher of ancient times was able to make the deep things understood by all, and yet, Jesus, transcending them all, in depth, was understood by all. It was Celsus who said, "He must be void of understanding who can believe that Greeks and Barbarians in Asia, Europe and Lydia, - all nations to the ends of the earth - can unite in one and the same religious doctrine".

Plato said, "It is not easy to find the Father and Creator of all existence, and when He is found it is impossible to make Him known to all". But this is exactly what Jesus did, for, as Celsus says, "Woolen manufacturers, shoemakers and curriers, the most uneducated and boorish of men, are zealous of this religion".

Therefore, such a balance as is shown in the union of these qualities bespeaks for Christ extra-human ability.

#### 4. Godliness and humanity.

Consider again, the union in Christ of Godliness and humanity. Christ never repented, for He was sinless. He lived in constant union and communion with God. The windows of His heart were continually open to the sunlight of Heaven. Though His sympathy, power and wisdom were perpetually drawn upon, yet He found in

God the perpetual Source of life and strength. While others were sleeping, He would rise up a great while before day to be alone with God. The desert and the mountain and the wilderness were His favorite haunts and retreats. He claimed that He always did the things that were pleasing to the Father; He challenged others to convict Him of sin; the Prince of this world came, but found no part in Him; He was not alone, for the Father was in Him; His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work; All things were delivered unto Him of the Father; He was the Redeemer and the Judge of a race of sinners. Though He was ushered to the Crucifixion, yet He claimed that He had power to summon legions of angels to His support; though He was asked to suffer and die the most contemptible death, yet He never expressed a feeling of ill-desert; though He was maltreated, treated without justice, scourged, spat upon, hissed and jeered, yet He opened Not His mouth, except to plead their forgiveness.

Coupled with this "superhuman" grandeur, we find in Him qualities which are characteristically human. He loves the children, blesses them, and everlastingly honors them by making the childlike spirit the condition of entrance into His Kingdom. We note

His affectionate discourses to His disciples; we see, again, His buoyant compassion towards a city that will not receive Him, and to the multitudes who are shepherdless. We see that He is perfectly at home with His friends at Bethany; we observe the tears at the grave of Lazarus; we note His anxiety that His chosen friends be with Him in the dark hours; we hear His tender words from the Cross to the beloved disciple and to His mother.

This combination of spiritual and human qualities gives an extraordinary balance that pledges clearness and sobriety, of self-consciousness. He was both God and man. "Thou seemest human and divine, The highest, holiest manhood Thou: Our wills are ours we know not how: Our wills are ours to make them Thine".

##### 5. Austerity and joy.

Christ combines in His person a grave austerity with a sacred joy. He had a serious mission to perform, great responsibilities were upon Him. He was in the midst of those who were non-appreciative of the true values in life. In addition to this, His lot was the lot of privation; He had no home, no powerful friends, and no material possessions. To all human appearances, His plans had failed. Surely there



was ground for austerity. But, united with this, He had a "rejoicing spirit". He had a joy that He wished to pass on to His disciples; It was the joy which comes from the consciousness of being morally spotless, of having finished His task, of possessing an immortal hope, and of enjoying a spiritual oneness with the Father.

Such a combination is rare among men.

6. Loved the sinner but hated sin.

Jesus, passionately loved the sinner, but as intensely hated the sin. "This is a combination which overtaxes human infirmity. With men, ordinarily, either sympathy infringes more or less upon the domain of principle, or principle trenches in some measure upon sympathy". (Sheldon-"System of Christian Doctrine"page 92)

Christ loved those who were outcasts, who were the off-scourings of society. He loved those who had so far fallen in sin that they were deemed worthy of death. The fallen, realizing His love, flocked to Him to reap the benefits therefrom. But He did not tolerate sin in any form; He kicked it out of the Temple; He went back of the act to the motive and disposition, and said that anger was akin to murder and an unchaste desire

comparable to adultery. He would have no division of heart between God and mammon; He would permit no compromises. He urged that the right hand be cut off, or the right eye plucked out if it were necessary, to get rid of sin.

#### 7. Otherworldliness and contact with this world.

Again, there is manifest in Christ a remarkable union of otherworldliness, and a kindly contact with this world. When men become interested thoroughly in the things of the other world, they are often accused of being ascetic and negligent about the things of this world. This is not so with Christ. He spoke many times as not being of this world. He told the disciples that because they were not of the world they would be persecuted. Christ's interest lay in the things of the heavenly Kingdom so much that He urged others not to take thought of the things of this life, what they shall eat and wear. We ought not to spend money for that which is not bread, nor should we lay up treasures upon earth where thieves break through and steal, but lay up treasures in Heaven. Christ had meant that the disciples knew not of. But, at the same time, He ~~takes~~ takes a keen interest in the affairs here and now.

Much of His teaching implies that this life is very

significant as determining our eternal destinies, that what is bound on earth is also bound in Heaven. He did not scourge His body, but healed physical ailments; He attended festive gatherings, and indirectly upheld the fundamental institutions of this life. He did not condemn the world as inherently evil, but through His analogies, and love for nature, forever enhanced it as a witness for God that speaks in no uncertain terms.

#### 8. Manliness and an effeminate tenderness.

Again there is united in Christ a stalwart manliness, with an effeminate tenderness. The tendency is to lean to one side or the other, but in Christ we have a beautiful balance of these two characteristics. His masculinity was shown early, when a mere lad in the Temple; it was shown in His arraignment of current ecclesiasticism; it cropped out when He, referring to Herod, remarked, "go tell that fox!". It was exemplified in the fact that He never resorted to finesse as did Paul, on the castle stairs. He never vacillated as did Peter; never made a concession; He made no accommodations, except to ignorance. He set aside Jewish law; went into the Temple and authoritatively expelled the traffickers, denounced the Scribes and Pharisees to their faces. He went into the Jewish capital to meet

certain death; He advanced toward the soldiers; He was heroic to the last, with blood trickling down His face, and pouring from His pierced hands and feet and side. Where do we find such masculinity?

But, coupled with this strength, there is the tenderness of woman. His heart went out to the children:

"Yet sure the babe is in the cradle blest,  
Since God Himself a baby deigned to be,  
And slept upon a mortal mother's breast,  
And steeped in baby tears His deity."

We see this trait in His quick thought of others; He treated the poor with careful consideration: "Let us hear", said Celsus, "what kind of persons these Christians invite. Everyone, they say, who is a sinner, who is devoid of understanding, who is a child, him will the Kingdom of God receive". His tenderness was revealed in His sympathy with the widows and the lonely, and in His attitude towards the sick and wretched; It was shown in His remembrance of His mother, in His faithful love of those whom He could help, in His heartbroken cry over Jerusalem, in His teaching of the twelve, and His last words with them, and in His relation with Peter and John.

### 9. Local but universal.

Once again, consider that He dealt with the local situation, but, at the same time, spoke for eternity to hear. Christ taught, largely, as occasion demanded and suggested, but His teachings, nevertheless, have universal application and meaning. He was a Jew, living in a small world. He "gathered up in Himself what appertains to all humanity in every age, and in every nation. This is one of the principal characteristics by which Jesus is distinguished from all the great spirits of antiquity, even the greatest of them. However profound in thought these men have been, however comprehensive in action, they still bear, all of them, the impress of their own peculiar nation, they still mirror back the age in which they lived; and this is true, not only of their life in its outward form, but also of their deepest and inmost nature.....But Jesus was the realization of the ideal of humanity; and thus He was the first who, setting out from His own people, was not confined in His working within its limits. He embraced the whole human race in the circle of His love; for it He sought to live and He dared to die". (Ullmann, "The Sinlessness of Jesus".)

"Thus the chase of the centuries after Christ.

this noble pursuit with its eternal failure to overtake or even approach the receding and growing splendor, is the most amazing proclamation of the infinitude of our Lord.....There can never be an adequate reproduction. The greatness of Christ must be the surprise of the centuries: the last hours of time must have for their romance the fresh unveilings of His majesty; and the perpetual delight of the everlasting future must be the ever grander discovery of His significance". (Gordon-"The Christ of Today".)

It seems incredible that these qualities could be reconciled and balanced within the compass of any human individual. They bear an indubitable testimony to Christ's divinity.

### C.

#### The testimony of various relations into which Christ came.

The testimony which the various relations into which He came bear to His divinity,

#### 1. He supplied all needs.

He supplied all needs, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. His miracles bear testimony in this respect, that they met actual needs, and were

never performed for show and curiosity. As evidence that He supplied their every need, witness the multitudes coming to Him for healing, sympathy, and friendship.

2. His relation to women.

His relation to women was somewhat contrary to customs of His time, which testifies for Him an unusual position. The law was, that "A man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife". "Better that the words of the law should be burned than that they be delivered to women". One of the thanksgivings in the daily service of the synagogue was, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who has not made me a woman." Christ, however, mingled freely with them.

3. Free from current superstitions and religious distortions.

He was free from the current superstitions and religious distortions. When the people heard that Pilate had murdered a lot of Galileans, they expected Jesus to say that it was a judgment upon them for their sins. Jesus answered, "Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish". He urged that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. He was free

from the materialistic notions of worship, as is shown by His statement to the woman at the well, and by His Sermon on the Mount. He attacked the formalism of the Pharisees and Scribes. "Yet Jesus did not swing over to the other extreme and boast Himself as an untrammelled liberal. He did not make capital for a destructive movement out of His advance beyond the narrowness of His time and nation, and His freedom from it".

#### 4. Others obeyed Jesus.

Others obeyed Jesus in a remarkable way. Only two refused to obey, and these were the rich young ruler, and the one who wanted to go and bury his dead, but these commands were tests. Andrew, Peter, Matthew and Philip left their tasks and followed Him. He made obedience the test of discipleship, and exacted it at whatever cost, even wealth, bitterness, and home ties were not to stand in the way. They obeyed some astounding things: They fell in at once with the plan of feeding the five thousand; two went to prepare the last supper on the chance of meeting a man with a pitcher of water; two went to find a colt for the Master's use; Simon went to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth. He must have been an unusual character.



## 5. Impressions made upon others.

The impressions which He made upon others, also give testimony to His divinity: Even His enemies had a good word to say about Him: Judas cried, "I have shed innocent blood"; Pilate remarked, "I find no fault in this man"; Pilate's wife urged that he "have nothing to do with that just man"; the Roman centurion dropped the remark that "Surely this was a righteous man"; and the criminal beside Him said, "This man hath done nothing amiss". He created astonishment and amazement many times at His originality and authority, at the fact that His origin and training would not account for Him, at His sagacity and enthusiasm, at the unusual things which He showed them, and at the God in Him. It sometimes knew no bounds, and great demonstrations resulted. His patience, calmness, keen dialectic, culture, and miracles created dumb wonderment.

Upon others, He created shame: The multitudes often were shamed, and when the Jews brought the fallen woman before Jesus, His one question caused them to sneak away. In others He produced hope and confidence: The blind man began to cry out when he heard that Jesus was passing by; rumors went over the whole region about Him; and Peter exclaims, "To whom

shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life".

Upon others He produced fear and hatred: The Gerasenes asked Him to depart; at the raising up of the son of the Nain widow, fear fell upon them all: The Pharisees were filled with madness when He healed on the Sabbath; the chief <sup>Priests</sup> sought how they might destroy Him when He drove the money changers out of the Temple. He seems to have had a strong influence and fascination upon all. On the way to Jerusalem, the disciples were amazed, and walked behind fearful; Peter said they had left all and followed Him; they were sorry when He told them He would be killed; the officers sent to take Him said, never man so spake; the multitudes said it thundered, and that an angel spoke to Him. Many deeply loved Jesus: Thomas said, "Let us also go that we may die with Him"; Joseph took His body and placed it in the tomb; John rested upon His bosom. This is to be borne in mind, that He was critically observed, that this influence was not due to any outward circumstance, and that He was quite careless of what people thought of Him.

6. The better He was known, the more was He acknowledged as a Superior.

The better He was known, the more was He acknowledged as Superior: His mother believed that He could

replenish the wine, urged the servants to do what He said, and obeyed Him when He told her to make her home with John; John the Baptist said he had need of baptism from Him, pointed Him out as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and said that He must increase, but I must decrease; Simon Peter said that He had the words of eternal life, that He was the Christ, that the crucifixion would never happen to Him, and he went out and wept when he knew he had denied his Christ; the woman at the well perceived that He was a prophet, and led many other Samaritans to Him. Popular opinion among those intimate ~~was~~ that He ~~was~~ the son of God: Andrew told Peter he had found the Messiah; Nathanael said, "Thou art the Son of God"; the Samaritans believed that He was indeed the Saviour of the world; of the multitude, many believed on Him, even taking palms and branches to go and meet Him, and the Pharisees remarked that the world had gone after Him.

"In proportion as we understand the state of Jewish life, character and opinion in Jesus' day, shall we value the testimony of increasing respect in which He was held by those whose increasing respect showed itself in evermore deadly hostility and hatred, bearing

witness to the light by manifesting the opposition and bitterness of darkness. And so still the better Jesus is known, the more He is respected and loved; and ~~those~~<sup>he</sup> who conditioned His faith in His resurrection upon the evidence of personal knowledge and close scrutiny,<sup>came</sup> to say, "My Lord and my God". (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus").

Thus the testimony of Jesus' relations point irresistably to His divinity.

#### D.

##### The sinlessness of Christ in the Gospel picture as an evidence for His Divinity

The Gospel picture of Christ presents Him spotless. It is true that some say that Christ in reproving the over-anxiety of His mother, or in sharply denouncing the Scribes and Pharisees, or in driving out the Temple traffickers, or in cursing the barren fig tree committed sins, but anyone who is so inclined can easily justify these outbreaks, if not show that they are preferable.

The Gospel portrait manifestly presents Jesus as conscious of His coming from Heaven and as being sinless. In fact, He once challenged His hearers to convict Him of sin. No one convicted Him of sin in our sense of the word, nor was He ever conscious of sin. In fact, He claimed to be Judge over sinners. Now He

must have been sinless, or His life would have borne the fruit of sin. It is as Bushnell says; "Piety without one dash of repentance, one ingenious confession of wrong, one tear, one look of contrition, one request to Heaven for pardon - let anyone of mankind try this kind of piety, and see how long it will be ere his righteousness will prove itself to be the most impudent conceit! how long before his passions, sobered by no contrition, his pride kept down by no repentance, will tempt him into absurdities that will turn his pretences into mockery". Jesus was not conscious of sin, neither did He repent, nor did His life bear the fruits of sin. "He is never repentent, never asks pardon for His sins, prays only for the forgiveness of the sins of others, and yet His piety stays ever fresh and sweet and ingenious". (Speer-"The Man Christ Jesus").

Christ's spiritual power and insight betokened His sinlessness. Sin dulls the conscience and spiritual sensibilities, but Christ presented a picture of perfect oneness with God, and the accompanying spiritual power and freedom. He stood above all things, customs, laws, and men.

In view of the fact of the wonderful balance and proportion found in every phase of Christ's Person and

work, we cannot believe that He would make such positive assertions concerning Himself without their being true. He must have been sinless or He would have fallen and His whole system overthrown. If He was sinless, it points to His divinity, for no human being has ever been able to attain such proportions and satisfy both himself and others on the matter.

We, therefore, conclude that Christ's remarkable project and His attack upon it, His incomparable character, combining contrasted and other remarkable qualities, His bearing in His relations, and His sinlessness, as portrayed in the Gospels, present a mass of testimony and evidence to Christ's divinity which is compelling.

"If Jesus Christ is a man  
And only a man, I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,  
And to Him will I cleave alway."

"If Jesus Christ is a God,  
And the only God, I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, the air".

## II.

The testimony of the Character of Christ,  
as presented in the Gospels,  
to the proof and authority of the Bible.

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1. The necessity of holding to the Christ of history.

There have been many attempts to invent substitutes for the Christ of history. Some have urged that the Christ which we have is but the Christ of a doctrinal development. Others have contended that our Christ is the Christ which philosophic speculation has created. Still others maintain that the Christ of an experimental utility is all that is necessary. Now, certainly, each of these positions has something in its favor, but they are, nevertheless, untenable. The Christ of doctrinal development, perhaps, has this in its favor, that Christ did not intend to leave a full body of doctrine nor a complete church organization. He did not systematically frame His teachings into a body of doctrine, and pass it out to His followers. He never committed any of them to writing, so far as we know. He went about, here and there, with His disciples, teaching, usually, as the occasion demanded or gave opportunity. His teaching was as leaven which was to grow and expand gradually. He, Himself, was like a

corn of wheat which must die before He could bring forth fruit. "It was this capacity for growth and adaptation which constituted the uniqueness of the work of Jesus Christ, and gave to it its power". It is a matter of historical certainty, also, that outside factors have come into play in the development of doctrine, besides those in the beginning.

But, upon careful investigation, this theory is seen to be unsound. If we hold to this development idea closely, we shall see that it only increases the importance of the historical records. If development "implies continuous growth from earlier and simpler to later and more complex forms, according to fixed laws, and by means of resident forces, then we must regard the earlier forms and stages as being at least as important as the latter, and as containing within them the potentiality of all that was to be". If Christ is judged to be wholly unhistorical, then no doctrine of Christ developed from it can have any vital significance, either for faith or for reason. Myths do not develop into realities, but become greater myths.

We <sup>have already</sup> shall ~~try~~ and point out later, that the Christ of creative speculation is highly improbable. Suffice



it here to say that the Gospel narratives contain so many extraordinary things that any inventor or inventors would be more astonishing than the Hero.

The Christ of experimental utility is supported by this fact, that the vitality of religion must depend upon present experience, and not merely upon memories of the past. Without this experience, religion will drift into unrealities. Also it is quite universally agreed that the test of religious truth is its utility in meeting the deepest needs of life, and issuing in the highest and noblest life. But there must be an experience of something; experience must be founded in fact, or it remains suspended in mid-air, and there is no guarantee of its uniformity and permanence. To certain philosophers of the mystic type, this may be a possible position, but for the ordinary man who wants to find, in his religion, something actual, and in Christ something real, this position will not suffice. "It is impossible to find in mere ideas, still less in ideas divorced from all reality and actuality, the motive power, the force, the passion, and the sustaining grace that men and women need in this world to lift them out of the slough of sin and out of the pitiful weaknesses of the flesh, to those heights of self-denial

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and aspiration, and moral service, which every true religion involves and requires". (Selbie-"Aspects of Christ"). Thus this contention does not adequately account for the origin of the Christ of faith,<sup>or</sup> its persistence, and omits the divine aspect of religion, leaving us victims of the subjective effects of mere ideas, without a basis in fact.

These theories arose because mysticism and historical criticism have tended to belittle the historical Christ, and it seemed, therefore, practically a necessity to get along without the Christ of history if we are to have any Christ at all. But the question will not admit of such easy disposal. Such an attempt to settle it in this so-called practical manner, in the end, becomes highly impractical, as we have seen. Therefore we must enter the "back to Christ" movement, and endeavor to find the Gospel presentation of Christ authentic, at least in its main outlines, and to find in Christ the revelation of God. To do this most convincingly, it is necessary to meet criticism with criticism, and hold that we must take the total effect of Christ's Person upon the disciples and people of His time, and upon later ages, and the presuppositions involved in this. Our study limits us to the impressions

which He made upon those about Him, and the presuppositions of these impressions. It is with the total effect of His Personality with which we have to do, and not with the incidents of His career. The disciples may not all agree in what they saw and heard, but the important thing is that they saw and heard someone. They may color the impressions with their personalities, and recount them for a particular purpose, but the impressions come in for explanation.

2. The Gospel picture presupposes the historic Model.

Gospel picture cannot be rationally explained without the Divine Jesus before the authors as a Model.

a. There is a straightforwardness in the presentation of the Gospel Portrait of Jesus which gives an impression of reality. While all of the Gospels do not exactly agree on all details, yet they do not disagree fundamentally. There is a remarkable unity running throughout the narratives. They do not present a portrait that looks like a Mosaic, made up of legend, of mistaken reminiscences, of Jewish lore, of Rabbinical teachings, and of Greek philosophy. They were in touch with reality all the way through. They do not permit their imaginations to lead them into unrealities

like they would were they creating Him. They give details of inner thoughts, motives, conversations, emotions, and time and place. If this portrait were the work of unwarranted enthusiasm, we would again find an artificiality about it, and a reduction to a much lower plane. Enthusiasm works to a greater or less degree, according to a man's previous conceptions and modes of thought. Enthusiasm wouldn't keep Him balanced to do and say the right thing at the right time. The character presented is calm and authoritative, simple and steady in speech, and self-possessed. In the Gospels there is a directness, simplicity, and straightforwardness which savors of truthfulness. They set before us the most extraordinary Being of history, and yet they are as artless as the stories of childhood. "The authors do not think of themselves, but simply show us the Master".

b. Again, if the Gospel picture isn't true to reality, it is difficult to understand the motive for the invention of such a character, admitting that it could be done. It is certain that the character of Jesus is far different than any ideal of a hero of His times. The Jews considered themselves the chosen of God, holy and clean. The Gentiles were sinners, lower than dogs,

sordidly unclean and polluted. This was shown in their dress, in their food, in their Temple, sacrifices, ab-lutions, marriages, and in communion. Yet they had been conquered by the Romans, forced to tolerate the Roman guards, and to pay taxes to a Gentile government. It was an indescribable insult to be thus humbled and they, therefore, believed that the Messiah who was to come would throw off these Gentile shackles, establish a universal empire with the Jews at the head, and in-stall the Mosaic religion as the State religion.

On the other hand, Jesus came, urging upon them "repentance for the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. The Kingdom of heaven was for those who were humble and pure of heart, while the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees counted for nothing. Instead of the Messiah of militarism, Jesus came, bearing the badge of love, mercy, peace and forgiveness, and urged the same upon His followers. Instead of national glory and su-premacy, there must be charity and service. Instead of good fortune and riches in this world, attention must be given to laying up treasures in Heaven. He told of a dominion to be exercised in some future world with Himself as both Ruler and Judge. He was to live but a short time and then rise again. He even preferred

the Gentiles, in some instances, to the Jews. He remarked that the centurion's faith was greater than in all Israel, and then notified them that the children of the Kingdom would be cast out. He, indeed, was a strange Being in a strange land, with nothing attractive to offer to either Jew or Gentile. Just what motive an impostor would have in manufacturing such an unwelcome character is difficult to ascertain. His character "was so remote from all the ideas and anticipations of the times, so unfit to awaken sympathy, so unattractive to the heathen, so exasperating to the Jew, that it was the last to enter the mind of an impostor". (Channing's Sermon-"The Character of Christ").

c. From the standpoint of the remarkable character of Christ, it is highly improbable that He could be a myth. Perhaps the statement of Theodore Parker, that "it takes a Jesus to fabricate a Jesus", is a little too extravagant, but yet Christ furnishes such an extraordinary character that it staggers one's belief in the probability and possibility of His being a human creation. For example, Jesus used such a keen insight into human nature that an inventor would, in all probability, lack. No man, so far as we can discover, has ever had such a knowledge of human nature as Jesus.

Jesus knew His men and their possibilities when He chose them. He selected men who, to all human appearances, were unqualified for ordinary tasks, but He put upon them the responsibility of carrying out a program which was to be world-wide and eternal in its scope. How well He chose, history bears witness. He knew what was going on in men's minds, and anticipated their troubles or questionings. His answers to their questions were final, and either sent them away satisfied or rebuked.

Or, again, take His great familiarity with the deepest and eternal truths which have deeper meanings for every century. Jesus handles them all with an ease and familiarity such as has not been approached by anyone, even with Jesus' teachings before him. What other teacher has been able to see the eternal verities so clearly and lay them down, so that centuries of succeeding ages could feed upon them, and never find them exhausted? Jesus not only did this, but He lived also in the present, and there found the point of contact. What other teacher has been so sublime, and yet so simple; so comprehensive, yet so local? Jesus absolutely brooks no comparison.

There are countless other combinations of His

character and teachings which are beyond human experience. Whoever was so egotistical and self-assertive, but yet so meek and humble as Jesus? Where do we find a better example of independence and dependence combined? We can find no one who was so otherworldly on the one hand, but yet so worldly as Jesus on the other. We never see people both stern and austere, and, at the same time, so full of deep joy as we see in Jesus. Human beings can't hate sin and love sinners as did Jesus. Jesus' person throbbed with divine passion, but, at the same time, He was always calm and self-possessed. In the light of these characteristics, and in the light of the combination of contrasted qualities, together with a perfect balance, it seems impossible that Jesus could have been invented. Certainly the disciples were not qualified to do so, for a study of the Gospels shows that they had no imagination, were timid of understanding, unable to draw obvious conclusions, and to transcend the commonplace and comprehend the unfamiliar, or find a rational reason for the extraordinary. "Such men might dream dreams and see visions, but to invent an absolutely novel, intellectual conception as to their Master's person and death, - a conception that changed man's view of God, of



sin, of humanity, of history; in a word, of all things human and divine-was surely a feat beyond them".

(Selbie-"Aspects of Christ"). More than that, we may, in the light of precedent, experience and observation, hold that it is an impossibility that anyone should be able to invent a character like Jesus represents. We are, therefore, justified in claiming that the character of Jesus, as presented in the Gospels, is such as to warrant us in asserting that it is a strong testimony to the essential authenticity of the Gospel narratives, and that Jesus is the Christ who lived upon the earth. Because Christ's superlative personality is the greatest of miracles, we are compelled to credit the substantial accord of the Gospel narratives with the historical reality. "The incomparable Model must have been before the primitive disciples, or the characteristics of the Gospel picture mount above all rational explanation". (Sheldon-"System of Christian Doctrine"-page 94).

3. The Character of Christ is such as to warrant its remarkable Biblical antecedents and consequents, and thereby gives testimony to the proof of the Bible.

Christ represents the summit of Scripture. Scripture is to be judged worthy in proportion as it ap-

proaches the Christ standard. The Bible has significance for humanity only as the mind of Christ is carried throughout the entire collection of Biblical writings as the absolute judge of their worth. The Bible doesn't prove Christ, but Christ proves the Bible. Says Dr. Gordon, "The Bible owes infinitely more to Christ than Christ does to the Bible". In fact, the spirit of Christ is demanded in the critic for a supplement and corrective for the results of the scientific method in the study of the Scriptures. A proper consideration of the Bible, as a whole, will show that it is essentially an organism of redemption. "As such it finds naturally its unifying principle in the person and work of the Redeemer.....The unique personality as it is imaged in the Gospel narratives, the forecaste of the same in Messianic prophecy, and the Christ-filled content of the whole apostolic literature, make together the very heart of Christian evidence". We have considered something of Christ's unique personality, as imaged in the Gospels. Our task now is to note the remarkable antecedents and consequents of this personality. Christ is as the apex of a triangle, with one side as the Messianic prophecy, and the other the Christ-filled literature

of the Apostles.

No earthly biography has had such a remarkable preface as that of Christ's. The Messianic ideal marvelously approached the crowning perfect revelation in Christ Jesus. The Prophets saw far ahead to the coming of a Redeemer, - a Redeemer in some respects inferior to Christ - but, on the whole, strenuously approaching Him. Their motive seems to have been two fold: They loved righteousness and would not be satisfied until a righteous commonwealth be established; they wished to inspire confidence that this end could be realized, that in spite of present circumstances, God, through the Messiah, would bring it about. The old covenant between God and Israel was not broken, but a new covenant was to be effected, more intimate, wherein Israel was to be the spouse of God in righteousness, judgment and mercy. The law would be written upon their hearts, and everyone should know the Lord. The Redeemer was to come and redeem Israel through His suffering. He shall be a King under whose rule mercy and truth shall meet together. "There shall come a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, and the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the

spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his reins. The government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government, and of peace, there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to establish it with judgment and righteousness from henceforth and forever." (Isa. 11:1-5, 9: 6,7).

Jeremiah speaks similarly. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute judgment, and justice in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, 'The Lord is our righteousness'". (Jer. 23; 5,6).

Micah and Zechariah describe the earthly coming of the prince of David's house:

"Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, which are little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

(Micah 5:2). "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;

shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh,

unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass. (Zech, 9:9). Daniel, on the other hand, emphasizes his heavenly majesty: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a Kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed". (Dan.7:13,14)

The Kingdom which was portrayed was a blessed Kingdom; a place where there shall be no malice, a place of peace, a land so filled with good things that even the desert will blossom as the rose, obtainable without money and without price, a land where there shall be no darkness, and the veil of sorrow will be forever lifted. It is such a presentation of an ideal that it still lies beyond us.

Thus the person of Christ has this wonderful preface. It so nearly approaches Christ and His Kingdom, both here and hereafter, that we may suppose that the Prophets were under the spell of Him who gave His

only Begotten Son. Otherwise it is difficult to account for the marked similarity.

We have, in the Apostolic literature, a supplement to the unique personality pictured in the Gospels, that is as congruous thereto as the remarkable preface already considered. This supplement is literally saturated with the Spirit of Christ. Christ is exalted to a place of transcendent dignity, and upon Him and His gracious offices depend the spiritual interests of men. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to those that believeth; "He is described as the one Lord through whom are all things; as having all things summed up in Himself; as being the one in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, and by whom He reconciles all things unto Himself; as the foundation for which there is no substitute; as the power of God and the wisdom of God; as the Lord of the dead and of the living; as the Saviour who has abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light; as the Lord of glory; as the one whose face reveals the light of the knowledge of the glory of God; as being the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very image of His substance; as the author and perfecter of faith; as having a name in which every

knee shall bow; as the first and the last, and holding the keys of death and Hades; as the object of the doxology, in which the heavenly hosts unite in saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing; as being along with the Lord Almighty the temple and the light of Heaven".

(Sheldon-"System of Christian Doctrine"-pages 100-101).

For the chief apostle to live, meant Christ to live; believers must be crucified with Christ and find new life in Him; they are to be new creatures in Christ; they must make up in suffering that which was lacking in the body of Christ; they are members of Christ's body; they are to be made free in Christ from all condemnation. "In fine, the apostolic literature is one continuous illustration of the significance of Christ's person and of the overmastering impression made by this revelation of divine truth and saving purpose".

Thus we see that the Bible is an organism presenting a scheme of salvation, culminating in the person and work of the Redeemer. Christ not only becomes a testimony to the proof of the Bible, but is the distinctive testimony.

## III

The bearing of the Character of Christ,  
as presented in the Gospels, upon  
the miraculous element in the same.

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1. Emphasis on miracles.

The subject of miracles has been the ground for much heated theological debate. Their importance has been unduly emphasized, and confusion has resulted. Friends and foes alike, have too many times approached the question from the wrong viewpoint; friends have treated Christianity and miracles and have viewed the latter as an evidence for the former, and have taken them as external supports rather than as essential parts of a system; foes have taken particular miracles and have asked, can this be credible? It is usually found that it is not credible on their naturalistic basis, therefore it is not an evidence for Christianity, and difficulty arises. Then follows the query whether the doctrine proves the miracles or the miracles, the doctrine, and they finally decide that the doctrine proves the miracles, and therefore doctrine is better off without the grievous load of miracles. The result is that miracles are thrown overboard as surplus baggage.



The true viewpoint is to include the miraculous element in the Christian system as one phase of it. The whole system of Christianity is supernatural and in that sense is miraculous. It proclaims an immanent God who cares for us, and is seeking to develop us into His likeness. In doing this He maintains the order of nature upon which we are dependent; He works through minds and society, education and history. He sends prophets and teachers to reveal Himself, and that revelation culminates in Jesus. It is all miraculous; the incarnation is, in itself, a stupendous miracle, and if that is accepted, then these other lesser details ought to cause no great difficulties. In this view, miracles become only a lesser part of the greater miraculous revelation in Christ. We must accustom ourselves to come to the miracles through Christ, rather than to Christ through the miracles.

## 2. Virgin birth.

Without approaching the question of the Virgin birth through Christ, rather than Christ through the Virgin birth, we get into trouble. Arguments can be presented on either side. Some have urged that the Virgin birth is a fiction because neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor John ever referred to it. In answer to this,

we may urge that it was a subject which delicacy and prudence would forbid discussion in surroundings which were hostile and suspicious. The charges of adultery and bastardy made by Celsus show the possibilities resulting from insisting on this doctrine. That it was not mentioned in the Epistles argues for it, because it shows that it was not invented to substantiate any doctrinal claim. As to John's silence on the question, his narrative was such in plan as to exclude it, and his silence on the matter, when he must have had Matthew and Luke before him, shows that he, at least, had no interest in contradicting their claims. Again it is somewhat difficult to tell why Matthew would give the genealogical table of Joseph when Joseph was supposed to have no part in the matter.

Thus we have difficulties when we consider it as external to the Christian system. For those of us who hold to Christ's divinity and incarnation, the supernatural conception becomes a matter of secondary importance though we believe in it because of its beauty and aesthetic fitness as inaugurating a new era in the great order of divine revelation. The fact that the New Testament makes no dogmatic use of the doctrine ought to make us cautious about making it a fundamental

doctrine in our faith, yet it would be difficult to imagine a more expedient and economical way to usher Christ into the world. It is perfectly congruous with Christ's unique character and personality. It is a matter that can never be put to a decisive test, and whether or not we accept it by faith depends largely upon our sympathy with Christianity as a supernatural system of which the Virgin birth is but a fitting and harmonious detail.

### 3. Christ's miracles.

Historically, the aversion to the miraculous arose with the belief in the undivineness of the natural. But that contention has been pretty well exploded in favor of an immanent personal God who is free. The laws of nature do not have power in themselves, but represent the way that God works. Miracles do not necessarily overthrow natural law, but are extraordinary works of God, in and through the natural, for some worthy end. A free working God can introduce effects into nature as can man, without destroying or injuring the integrity of the system. "As when a man, by his free choice, casts a branch into a stream, it is borne on in accordance with the laws of nature, though those laws might never have brought it into the stream, so the physical

effect of a miraculous working enters the stream of natural causes, and is borne on with its ceaseless flow. The stream neither generates the effect nor is turned aside by it; it simply takes up what is brought to it by divine interposition". (Sheldon "System of Christian Doctrine"-ppg.106). All that must be demanded is that the system must not be so often affected as to disturb the stability of the natural order so that we cannot rely upon it.

Keeping this viewpoint in mind, the miracles which Jesus performed offer no serious difficulty for those who believe in the supernatural character of Christianity. If we can approach the miracles through Christ, and not Christ through the miracles, our difficulty vanishes. We will not be asking, did Jesus raise the dead, or did the disciples find the coin in the fish's mouth? These are details of a system whose light makes such discussions idle. We believe that the character of Jesus, as presented in the Gospels, is a testimony to His divinity, and therefore there is no difficulty in believing that He could perform miracles. The character of Christ is such that such works are perfectly harmonious and fitting. The Gospel miracles meet the test, that they must be performed for some

worthy end, and that they must be an effective means to promote moral and spiritual development. They were reasonable and right, meeting actual needs, and were never performed for show or to satisfy curiosity. In contrast to this, consider Mohammed: "The moon, after going seven times round the Kaaba, saluted him (Mohammed), entered his right sleeve and slipped out at the left, split into two halves, which reunited after having retired to the extreme east and west".

#### 4. The Resurrection.

One of the chief grounds for belief in the Resurrection lies in the fact of Christ's unique personality as depicted in the Gospels. Christ represents the center of a supernatural system, and the Resurrection furnishes an appropriate culmination of His life on earth. Christ became flesh, and we are willing to believe anything that fits into this magnificent conception. What could be more fitting than that this divine Son, who revealed the Father, who was obedient unto death, should conquer death and rise in triumph? If Christ's mission was to save men, this was a fitting means to inspire confidence in His saving power, and to foster a hope of immortal life. "The sober conclusion must be if it was worth while to provide an extraordinary Redeemer, it

was worth while also to furnish Him with the redemptive potency incontestably inherent in the great fact of His "resurrection". (Sheldon-"System of Christian Doctrine" page 581). What else could have been done on the Christian theory? It is perfectly in harmony with the general thought, and seems to have been just the thing that the disciples needed and that the church has needed ever since, to complete their faith in their Lord. "The apostles at the beginning were preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and this was the general faith of the church from the start. Something must have happened to change the band of fleeing disciples into these world-defiers and world-conquerors which they so soon became. If there was no fact behind it all, whence did this new conviction and mighty courage come? It is quite idle to talk of vague possibilities of evolution and all that, for these things were not done in a corner, and too much has come from them to suppose the faith fictitious. If nothing had resulted, if there had been only a momentary flicker of enthusiasm, we might well believe that it was all a mistake; but when the Christian church sprang out of it and still endures through faith in it, we certainly need not be ashamed of our faith in the face of anything that science or historical

criticism may say. Some will call it the Christian superstition. We call it the Christian faith. To some, it is still a stumbling block and foolishness, to others it is the power of God and the wisdom of God". (Bowne-"The Essence of Religion"-ppgs.297-98).

Whether or not these testimonies furnish valid evidences, depends, as has been said, upon our world view. We can't force anyone to believe in them if he has no sympathy with religion. But he who responds to the significance of religion, must see in the Character of Christ, as presented in the Gospels, that which makes the Virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, and the resurrection, perfectly congruous, harmonious, and fitting.

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