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Jesus Christ our ideal

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THESIS

JESUS CHRIST OUR IDEAL

BY

Seneca Alfred Rear.

JESUS CHRIST OUR IDEAL

There is only one unique character in the history of the human race that appeals to our intellectual and moral insight as ideal. We have kings many, warriors many, prophets many, teachers many, and saints many, but only one Jesus Christ. When men once get a glimpse of Jesus Christ, all other characters sink into insignificance and vanish like the stars before the rising sun. Jesus Christ stands alone as the Light of the world. He is the Divine Light that "lighteth every man coming into the world".

In our study then of this wonderful character, we can but point in the direction of the object of our admiration but not reach an adequate expression of its surpassing grandeur and glory. Therefore, just as a child utterly ignorant of the distance of the stars points towards them, so we can but point to the Ideal that lies before and beyond us.

There are many ways of studying this striking character. It is our purpose therefore to confine ourselves to three prominent features in the life of Jesus. These relate respectively to his divine origin and approach to men through his Incarnation, his divine mission of love and redemption for a lost and ruined race culminating in his death and resurrection, and finally his divine presence in our hearts attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

In regard to his divine origin and approach to men through his Incarnation, we are at once confronted with the problem of his Super-human birth. Of course this also implies his pre-existence. Immediately therefore we are obliged to take sides against the humanitarians who will hear of nothing miraculous concerning Jesus Christ.

But the miraculous is no obstacle only to the hide-bound necessitarian, or materialist, who will hear of

nothing but abstractions such as matter and force and motion. A system of things run by blind mechanism, or even started off by an intelligent Being and then left to work itself out from sheer necessity, would, of course, exclude everything miraculous. But such a system demands that everything, even to the minutest details, has from all time, been potentially provided for.

But it is not the purpose of this thesis to prove the possibility of the miraculous, nor even to prove the Divinity of Jesus Christ. We assume these from the start. But while we make this assumption, it is not without a rational and historical basis.

The ethical nature of God is such that, in its absolute perfection, there is a demand for a perfect object of love. Love without an object to love is unthinkable. And love that cannot reciprocate in like response is not an adequate object of love. Finite beings are not an adequate object of love for the Infinite. Nothing short of a co-eternal Person whose will absolutely reciprocates with the Infinite will could be an adequate object of love.

In speaking of Jesus as the Son of God we must not carry temporal distinctions into God. God is not in time but founds time in human intelligence, as a mark of its finite limitation. The same is true of space. Space and time are marks of finite limitations. But the Infinite has no limitations. Nevertheless, the Infinite may impose limitations upon the finite, and even upon itself in order to accomplish its own purposes in and through the finite.

It is this fact that has made possible the advent of Jesus Christ into the world under human limitations. But if he had suddenly appeared in our world as a full grown man, and had immediately begun to perform miracles, to raise the dead, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils and feed the multitudes, he would not only have startled all the world but he would have actually demoralized the human race. As long as this would be kept up the whole race would naturally run after him. But imagine the paralysis that would have befallen the people upon his disappearance again! Or imagine, if you please, that he had remained on the

earth under such conditions, what kind of race would we have had! Of course everybody would have shouted long live the Messiah! All business, all human industries would have come to a standstill; for there would have been no need to have worked when the Messiah, at a word, could have clothed and fed them and healed their diseases.

But the impulse that would have drawn them to the Master would have been only that of the brute. Even a herd of swine will follow after the herdsman for the sake of the food he gives them. This does not require any moral insight on the part of the swine. Had Jesus come and remained on the earth making a spectacular show after that fashion, the whole human race would doubtless have endeavored to have migrated to Palestine, and would have fought like beasts to get within reach of the Master. No! The human race could not be helped morally and spiritually after that fashion.

When Jesus took on human limitations, it had to be done in such a way as to convey to the human race, in an intelligent way, God's holy will concerning them. Therefore, God was obliged to approach them on a plane that was on a level with themselves. If sinful men were to be made conscious of the Divine Will and led to respond to it, their wills must be reached through their understanding. And if human wills were to be moralized, then the Divine Will must not coerce, but give freedom to the human will, and win by the compulsion of love through the human understanding. If men were to learn that humility, obedience, diligence, faith, and brotherly love, were essential to secure divine favor, and that ceremonial rites without these essentials are an abomination to the Lord, then Jesus must approach the human race in such a way that these ideas might be forever fixed in the human understanding.

It was suitable therefore that he should make his visible approach to men under the form of human offspring, in such a manner as to call attention to his Divine Origin. But to have come into the world as an ordinary child, without any special Divine recognition, would

have defeated the very purpose of his coming. It was intended that the Divine should be recognized. It was intended also that the Divine and human should be united; or in other words, that the Divine should take on human limitations.

We are not surprised therefore that sufficient announcement was made to the responsible parties concerned in this momentous event about to take place. We are not surprised that the race itself had been prepared by the prophets for the coming of the Great Deliverer, the Mighty Counselor. That his kingship should be recognized by a special forerunner in the person of John the Baptist is certainly becoming such a mighty Prince. That the Most High and Holy God at the proper time should announce, through a heavenly messenger, to Mary, this extraordinary honor which the Almighty was to confer on the human race through her was befitting His Holy Majesty. And that he should condescend to explain to the bewildered Mary the method of the conception is likewise fitting. The language in which the intelligence was conveyed has a holy awe and surpassing grandeur that betokens the Divine Majesty. "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God". And as if to give her a visible sign to confirm her faith, he adds, "And behold, Elizabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren."

At this moment the true character of Mary gleams forth like an evening star. With holy resignation to the Divine Will, regardless of the reproaches of ignorant men and especially the suspicions that would naturally arise in the mind of her espoused Joseph, she meekly said, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word".

But other evidences also followed. When Elizabeth was greeted by Mary, she declared that when the mother of her Lord drew near and her voice was heard that the babe, though yet unborn, leaped within her for

joy. Miraculous tokens were also connected with the announcement of the birth and naming of John the Baptist. Zacharias was stricken dumb from the day of the announcement till the day of naming the child, John. Moreover Joseph too who had begun to suspect the unfaithfulness of his spouse and was minded to put her away privately was also informed of what had happened, in time to prevent a divorce.

Even the non-Jewish world had its part in the culmination of this great event. The Roman Empire had been extended till it included Palestine, and was exerting an influence wherever its political power held sway. The impulses and motives of this mighty political power in dealing with the antagonistic impulses of the Jewish people were all used to bring about a desired end.

The place for the birth of the promised Messiah had even been definitely foretold, seven centuries before by the prophet Micah, that it would be Bethlehem. His words are expressive of a deep seated conviction, and are uttered with genuine prophetic exultation as he exclaims, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel". But nevertheless it was inconceivable to the Jew that the Messiah should be born outside of Jerusalem, even though his ancestors might be traced through the House and lineage of David of Bethlehem. (I Sam. 17:12)

But the Great Maker of history and Director of human affairs so co-ordinated events that even this prediction was fulfilled. And the chief instrument through which this was made possible was the hated Roman authority. Here natural events, in exceeding complex relations, were used to bring about a supernatural purpose. Luke's remark about the "first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria" compared with the statement in Matthew, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of

Judaea in the days of Herod the king, that once calls our attention to the fact, that, granting the truth of both narratives, we are brought face to face with a complication of political events not easy to explain.

Considerable light, however, has been thrown on the subject by W.M. Ramsay in his book entitled, "Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?" In his cogent and lucid way, he shows that "there was a system of periodic enrolment in the Province Syria, according to a Fourteen Year's Cycle, and the first enrolment was made in the year 8 B.C. He further explains how that King Herod, who had lost the favor of Augustus, was henceforth treated as a subject, and was obliged to submit his kingdom to the enrolment plan. But that Herod, on the plea of sending embassages to Augustus, skillfully succeeded in winning the consent of Saturnius, governor of Syria, in getting the enrolment postponed, from time to time, till two years had elapsed. He thinks therefore that the first enrolment probably took place in the autumn of B.C. 6. Edersheim, Cassel, and others, however hold to the 25th of December as the date of our Lord's birth. Edersheim tells us that the 9th Tebeth, or 25th of December was regarded by the Jews as the birthday of Christ, and was, without giving reasons, marked as a fast-day.

But to return to the manner of enrolment, Herod was fully aware of the prejudice of the Jews against anything foreign. He therefore catered to the Jewish sentiment by giving the enrolment a tribal character and thus numbered the tribes of Israel.

It seems quite probable that, in making this concession to Jewish sentiment, Herod provided unconsciously an excuse for Mary as well as for Joseph in going up to Bethlehem. Edersheim remarks that, "perhaps for many reasons which will readily suggest themselves, Joseph and Mary might be glad to leave Nazareth, and seek if possible, a home in Bethlehem. Indeed so strong was the feeling that it afterwards required special Divine direction to induce Joseph to relinquish this chosen place of residence, and to return to Galilee. In these circumstances, Mary, now the wife of Joseph, though standing to him only in the actual relationship of betrothed, would, of course, accompany her husband to Bethlehem.

Irrespective of this, every feeling and hope in her must have prompted such a course, and there is no need to discuss whether Roman or Jewish Census-usage required her presence, a question which, if put, would have to be answered in the negative".

In regard to Luke's statement that Quirinius was governor of Syria, there has been much discussion. But the light of archaeological discoveries has made it reasonably evident that Luke was right in his use of the term military leader. It is generally agreed that Sentius Saturnius governed Syria from 9-7 B.C., Quinctilus Varus from 7-4 B.C., and that Herod died in 4 B.C. It is also agreed that Publius Sulpicius Quirinius was governor of Syria from 6-9 A.D. The difficulty therefore which arises is to reconcile Luke's statement with these historical facts. But some recent discoveries through archaeological research here come to our assistance.

Ramsay tells us that "there was found near Tibur in A.D. 1764 a fragment of marble with part of an inscription, which is now preserved in the Vatican Museum of Christian Antiquities.....The inscription records the career and honors of a Roman official who lived in the reign of Augustus and survived that Emperor. He conquered a nation; he was rewarded with two Supplications; and the Ornamenta Triumphalia, i.e., the gorgeous dress of a triumphing general, with ivory sceptre and chariot, etc.; he governed Asia as proconsul; and he twice governed Syria as legatus of the divine Augustus."

Though the name of that official has perished, yet scholars are convinced that Quirinius is the officer referred to. It is therefore practically certain that "his government in Syria A.D. 6-9 was his second tenure of office". That he held office in Syria and carried on war with the Homonadenses and received supplications on two different occasions is a known fact of history. Besides historical evidence goes to show that the two years, during which Quirinius was administering Syria and conquering the Homonadenses, could not have been later than B.C. 5-3 and most probably was earlier.

Ramsay tells us that, "about B.C. 8-5 Augustus made a great effort to pacify the dangerous and troublesome mountaineers of Taurus, to prevent the continual plundering which they practiced on the peaceable provinces to which they were neighbors, Asia, Galatia and Syria-Cilicia, and to avenge the death of the Roman tributary King of Galatia, Amyntas, in B.C. 25. Both the governor of Galatia and the governor of Syria were required in the work. This was evident since "Galatia did not contain an army, and the administration of Syria-Cilicia had always to intervene, when Roman troops were needed during that period on the eastern Roman frontiers".

In B.C. 6 Cornutus Aquila governor of Galatia laid the foundation of the Roman organization in that province, and established a military road system connecting a series of garrisoned cities. About the same time military operations were conducted in Syria.

It seems probable that when Varus came to be governor in Syria in B.C. 7 that "Augustus perceived that the internal affairs of the province would require all the energy of the regular governor, and sent at the same time a special officer with the usual title Lieutenant of Augustus to administer the military resources of the province and specially to conduct the war against the Homonadenses and any other foreign relations that demand military intervention. Moreover Varus had no experience in war; and an experienced officer was needed. Thus Quirinius conducted the war, pretty certainly, in B.C. 6".

Already we have noted that the first periodic enrolment of Syria was made under Saturnius in B.C. 8-7. We have further noted how Herod succeeded in having the enrolment in Palestine postponed for two years until the Autumn of B.C. 6. "At that time Varus was controlling the internal affairs of Syria while Quirinius was commanding its armies and directing its foreign policy". Therefore Luke was probably literally correct when he said that the first enrolment was made while Quirinius was acting as military leader (ἡγεμῶν) in Syria.

Whether or not we allow Ramsay's interpretation of the historical data to represent the facts, we must admit

Prof. Walter F. Adeney of New College, London, remarks that "it must be allowed that these researches have lessened the difficulties". Plainly Luke knows of the later census, for he refers to it in Acts (v. 37). Still his statements are perplexing; but even if it should be conceded that he was in the error as to the census here described, that is not sufficient ground for discrediting his narrative of the birth of Jesus, as it only concerns one of the accessories."

Thus we see that the birth of Jesus the Messiah at Bethlehem, according to the prophecy of Micah centuries before, was at least a remarkable co-incidence of events. Had the place of birth not been prophesied we might have said that this was a mere co-incidence. But to have it prophesied so long before and then come to pass so literally true makes it take on the phase of Divine purpose. But if Jesus was the promised Messiah and as such was to become a means of Divine approach to men it is not surprising if some extraordinary evidence in anticipation of so momentous a fact should be communicated to his faithful servants.

But whether or not we accept Ramsay's statement that Jesus was born in the early Autumn or late summer, or whether we accept Eder's statement that it occurred on the 25th of December, it matters not for our purpose. Eder's statement however concerning the class of shepherds and their flocks meant is significant. He tells us that the shepherds were not ordinary shepherds and that the flocks were those destined for temple-sacrifice. They are what Mde. Mountford calls "the Holy Flock of God" over which the good shepherds watch. Eder also tells us that these flocks lay out all the year round. The watch tower called Migdal Eder for the sacred flock was close to Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem. Here the shepherds watched the Temple-flocks all the year round. They "kept watch by turns", says the New Century Bible, "with fires burning to scare wild beasts".

Luke however gives us no clue as to the class of shepherds to which the angels appeared, but simply tells us that "there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over the flock". He was so interested in the heavenly recog-

dition of the birth of Jesus that, without further comment, he hastens to relate this more important fact. The shepherds are startled by the sudden appearance of an angel and the dazzling brightness which lit up the sky and fields about them. The message of the angel was one of radiant joy as he broke the glad tidings of the promised Saviour, and gave to the shepherds the sign by which they might recognize him. Then suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host broke into a song of praise to God and peace to men.

When the heavenly messengers had disappeared, and the shepherds had sufficiently recovered themselves, they decided to go to Bethlehem and see the child. They went with haste therefore and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in the manger, as the angel had said. The strange report of the shepherds caused the inhabitants and strangers of Bethlehem to wonder. "But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart".

On the eighth day, according to the custom of the law, the child Jesus was circumcised. Ederheim tells us that, according to Jewish law, the first born son of every household had to be redeemed of the priest at the price of five shekels of the sanctuary. The earliest period of presentation for redemption was thirty one days after birth. The purification of the mother for a son was fixed at forty one days after the birth of the child. But as the redemption of the first born and the purification might be combined, this was the order observed in the case of the child Jesus. In case the parents were poor, a turtle dove or a young pigeon might be offered for the purification instead of the usual lamb. Such was the offering which Mary and Joseph brought.

At the presenting of the child in the Temple for redemption, the venerable Simeon "received him into his arms, and blessed God" with prophetic insight, declaring that this child was "set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against". And no sooner had Simeon spoken than the aged and saintly Anna, a prophetess, came up and gave thanks to God, "and spoke of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem".

II.

Thus an atmosphere of general expectancy was created about the child Jesus that turned all eyes upon him. From Matthew we learn that even in the distant East the Wise Men had been attracted by a peculiar star, which they believed was a sign of the birth of the promised Messiah. They accordingly set out for the Jewish Capitol, Jerusalem, in search of the child.

The arrival of the Magi, with their strange question "Where is he that was born king of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him," was the cause of much alarm to Herod. He immediately called a conference of the chief priests and scribes to learn the place where the child should be born. And having learned that Bethlehem was the place prophesied for the birth of the Messiah, he next held a private interview with the Wise Men to get information regarding the exact time when the star appeared. The subsequent conduct of Herod shows that the first appearance of the strange siderial phenomenon must have been two years previous to their arrival, which according to Edersheim, occurred in 747 A.U.C. or 7 B.C., thus making the birth of Christ 749 A.U.C. or 5 B.C. Thus having concealed his real murderous motives, Herod sent away the Wise Men toward Bethlehem to find the child, pretending that he also wished to come and worship him. By this time Joseph and Mary had left the inn and had taken up their abode in a "House" at Bethlehem.

As the Magi set out on their journey, to their great joy the star again appeared and seemed to go before them in the direction of Bethlehem. Finally it seemed to stand over Bethlehem where the young child was. Whether or not we conceive of this phenomenon as a natural or miraculous event it matters not. It served the purpose of the Magi with their highly imaginative tendencies, and that was quite sufficient for them.

Edersheim tells us that according to Kepler, the astronomer, a most remarkable conjunction of planets -- that of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces, which occurs only once in 800 years -- did take place no less than three times in the year 747 A.U.C., or two years before the birth of Christ (in May, October, and December). This conjunction is admitted by all astronomers.....In the year following, that is, in 748 A.U.C.

another planet, Mars, joined this conjunction. Kepler therefore placed the nativity of Christ in 748 A.U.C. that is in 6 B.C., thus agreeing with Ramsay. "Kepler who was led to the discovery by observing a similar conjunction in 1603-4, also noticed, that when the three planets came into conjunction, a new, extraordinary, brilliant, and peculiarly colored evanescent star was visible between Jupiter and Saturn, and he suggested that a similar star had appeared under the same circumstances in the conjunction preceeding the Nativity".

Of course all these strange co-incidences are not the ground of our faith in the Divinity of Jesus. Yet granting that he is Divine, there is nothing to hinder us from believing that God so ~~co-ordinated~~ natural phenomena with the super-natural advent of Jesus as to meet the natural ~~tradition~~ of Jewish expectation regarding the appearance of the Messiah.

But whether or not this is the case, while Herod was so bent on making sure the death of the child Jesus that he heartlessly and diabolically ordered that all the male children, two years old and under should be slain, special divine warning was given to Joseph and Mary to take the young child and escape into Egypt. Thence we hear no more of the holy family until after Herod's death in 4 B.C., when they are assured that they may return to their native land in safety. After some pre-monitions about the new ruler, Archelaus, they decided to go back to Nazareth. From that time forward, with the single exception of his visit to Jerusalem when twelve years old, until he became a man about thirty years of age, we know nothing, save that "the child grew, and waked strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him", and finally that he was "subject" to his parents.

Edegaheim remarks that, "apart from all thoughts of the deeper necessity, both as regarded His Mission and the salvation of the world, of a true human development of gradual consciousness and personal life, Christ could not in any true sense have been subject to his parents, if they had fully understood that He was Divine; nor could He, in that case, have been watched, as He 'grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man.... The mystery

of the Incarnation would have been needless and fruitless, had his humanity not been subject to all its rights and ordinary conditions". Had not the mystery of His Divinity been kept in the background, "the bond which bound the Master to His disciples - the Son of Man to humanity - would have been dissolved; His teaching as a Man, the Incarnation, and the Tabernacling among men, in place of the former Old Testament Revelation from heaven, would have become wholly impossible".

Something deeper therefore than the Virgin Birth alone, though accompanied by miraculous attendants, was necessary to establish the true Divinity of Christ Jesus. The sacred writers, Mark and John, at any rate, did not make the story of the Virgin Birth the pillar upon which their faith hung, for they did not even mention the fact; though they doubtless knew about it and believed it as well. They had faith in the Divinity of Jesus because His Divinity manifested itself through His human personality in His life, death, and resurrection. Nevertheless the sinless and Divine life of Jesus once having been recognized, the Incarnation through the Virgin Birth makes a demand upon reason next to absolute necessity, if not entirely so, as is so ably shown by Dr. James Orr in his notable book called "The Virgin Birth". Moreover it is an important aid to faith and helps the crude understanding of men to get, at least, some vague conception of the fact that the Divine did actually take on human limitations, and actually passed through human stages of development and had real human experiences.

As to the genuineness of the sacred records themselves relating this story, Orr remarks, that these chapters in Matthew and Luke "containing the narratives of the Virgin Birth are attested by all available evidence as indubitably genuine parts of the respective Gospels". He adds that "there is not a single unmutulated MS. of the Gospels - older or younger - from which these chapters in Matthew and Luke are absent." Neither are they absent from any of the Versions so far as our evidence goes. Even the 'Gospel of the Hebrews', an Aramaic version of the Gospel of Matthew contains these chapters on the nativity.

It is generally agreed among scholars that the Gospels themselves are genuine documents of the Apostolic age. And everybody must also admit the honesty of the writers. The discrepancies between Matthew and Luke, in the two genealogies, may be accounted for from the fact that the narrative in Matthew is given from the standpoint of Joseph, and that in Luke from the standpoint of Mary. In the nature of the case, the stories would have to come primarily from Joseph and Mary themselves. It was not a thing to be made public. To have made it public at first would have brought discredit upon the story and have cast reproach upon themselves. Indeed Mary, so the sacred writer says, "treasured all these things in her heart".

Since a legend of this character would be altogether foreign to such an idea, the presumption is in favor of making Mary and Joseph the ultimate source of the stories from which the sacred writers derived their information. In regard to the Divine Personality taking on limitations such that His inner consciousness should be a subject of development, while baffling to the imagination, need not be a barrier to faith. The objection rests, as Professor Sheldon, in his New Testament Theology, remarks, on the supposed necessity that special union with the divine should have cancelled, on the part of Christ, all limitation of knowledge, all natural occasion for growth in the understanding of Himself and of the universe." And in reply to this theoretic Christological objection, the professor declares that "being and consciousness are never commensurate in us, and least of all are they so at the beginning of our career... In the Christ-child and the Christ-youth consciousness may (therefore) not have been by any means commensurate with being and essential relations... Granting that from the start there was an organic bond with the divine, perfectly unique, never duplicated in creaturely history, still it may be that in the consciousness of the Son of Mary this should be unrevealed until some favorable moment should afford an initial glimpse of it, and that advance to a full understanding of it should be along the path of a widening and deepening experience".

The Gospels set forth very clearly a "progressive unfoldment of the consciousness of Christ". "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature". He was subject to temptation, a universal mark of growing experience and developing self-realization. At His baptism He evidently "reached a new stage in His advance toward a perfectly luminous self-consciousness". And His convictions met with a response from heaven, acknowledging Him as the well-beloved Son of the Heavenly Father.

His own consciousness of perfect sinlessness and all absence of expressed penitence marks His development as unique and absolutely different from all human experience. Again "His Luminous sense of sonship in relation to God" is also unique in a sense surpassing human experience. This conscious relationship was His constant and abiding experience. He alone, of all the human race, reached the ideal consciousness. From the beginning of His Incarnation to the end of His earthly career, His development, both physically and self-consciously, was perfectly normal, and yet always at its maximum point for any given stage of development. It never fell below the perfect ideal.

Thus far we have spoken of Jesus Christ as our Ideal in respect to His Divine origin and approach to men through His Incarnation. We are now ready to consider Jesus Christ our Ideal in respect to His Divine mission of love and redemption for a sinful race culminating in His death and resurrection.

This ideal conscious relationship of Jesus with the Heavenly Father, of which we have just spoken, found its highest expression in loving communion with the Father. Jesus Himself was the supreme object and embodiment of the Father's love and good will toward men. At the baptism the Father's voice from heaven avowed "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased". And again at the transfiguration a voice out of the bright cloud overshadowing them said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him". And when the angels announced to the shepherds the advent of Jesus, the Son of God, into the world, they did not blow a blast of woes on the human race but rather came with exultant joy saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well
pleased".

Not that the human race was perfect: far from it! But rather, it was an expression of good will for the well-being of the whole human race. And Jesus was the token and embodiment of this heavenly and benign expression toward all men.

In our introductory remarks to this thesis, we intimated that the ethical nature of God was such that a perfect object of love, was not only necessary for His existence but also could not be satisfied in the finite, but must be sought in a Personal Other of like nature with Himself. In this Personal Other God could give full vent to His love. Jesus therefore in trying to express this highest kind of love to mortal men uses a term that carried with it the highest known experience of love and authority among men, viz. that of Father.

On this question of love between Father and Son and the human race, Francis J. Mc Connell, in his book entitled "The Divine Immanence" has well said that "if the Son is one to whom God has eternally given himself by ethical necessity, if there is perfect return of the Son's love to the Father, if sympathy means more between lives of this kind than it could mean in any other wise whatsoever - if, in a word, the Son is the object which God must have if he is to be an ethical God - then the limitation of the Son to the sufferings and moral perils of the human state becomes the heaviest conceivable cross for the Father. His willingness to yield to the Incarnation means more of a desire to come spiritually near us than could any revelation through a finite human organism created for the purpose. The spiritual approach, the revelation of a desire to make men see that God understands them and loves them and chooses them for his own, takes on enhanced dignity".

This conception of the unique relation between Father and Son and the human race provides for the closest possible spiritual approach of God to men. It provides for the pre-existence of the Son as taught

by the Evangelist John, and at once commands the highest and everlasting devotion of the human race. It puts us in a better position to appreciate the mystery of the developing consciousness of Jesus; to appreciate the self-imposed restraint on the divine nature, thus compelling developing self-realization through human limitations.

At his baptism he had reached such a degree of self-realization that he was fully conscious of his Messianism. The first clear experience of this self-realization of Divine power, recognized in audible voice by the Father at the baptism, became a tremendous source of temptation to his human impulses. The gauling restraint of human limitations weighed so heavily upon his expanding soul that he was compelled to withdraw from human contact, where, in the solitude of the wilderness, he could wrestle with his emotions and reconcile the impulses of his human and Divine nature. Here the principles upon which he should win the love and obedience of the world, in spite of the powers of darkness, were wrought out and tested by a triumphant victory over temptation.

The belief in the Incarnation of the pre-existent Jesus, so uniquely related to the Father, enables us to more fully appreciate his humility and sympathetic nature as he mingled with men. Nothing seemed too commonplace to command his considerate attention, and no one had fallen too low in the scale of humanity to receive his immediate assistance.

Thus in the very beginning of his ministry this spirit of helpfulness began to show itself. Jesus and his disciples, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, had accepted an invitation to a wedding in Cana of Galilee, the village home of Nathanael. This was the third day after Jesus, having returned from the Temptation in the Wilderness, had visited John who was still baptizing the multitudes beyond Jordan, and who had the day previous been visited by a delegation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem inquiring of him "Who art thou?".

As the wedding feast advanced, the wine, because of the increased attendance, failed, and Mary the mother

of Jesus, hoping that her son would manifest his Messiahship, said to him, "They have no wine." The manner in which Jesus recognized the ambitions of his mother has been well put by Professor James S. Riggs, of Auburn Theological Seminary. "Tenderly, earnestly he said to her, 'My dear woman, your aims and hopes are not mine. I cannot gratify you. The time has not come for the manifestation of my Messiahship. You do not understand what you are asking'. Realizing her mistake, yet confident that in some way, perhaps by sending to friends or by special purchase, he would relieve the embarrassment of the festivities, she said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you to do'."

The simple manner in which an abundant supply of wine was furnished, depending upon the obedience of the servants to fill the six stone jars with water, is familiar to all of us. It is worthy of note, that while Jesus would not convert stones into bread to appease his hunger at the suggestion of the devil, yet he would change water into wine at the suggestion of his mother to save the servants from the embarrassment of not having sufficient wine for the guests. Human feelings and motives were always of supreme importance to Jesus. When however these at any time indicated disregard for sacred functions of society or religion, his indignation and authority was at once aroused. He did not, for example, hesitate to drive the grasping money changers from the sacred precincts of the Temple, upset their tables and drive out the sheep and oxen, emphatically commanding, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of Merchandise".

On the other hand, however, the needy and distressed always received his sympathetic assistance. The pleading of the Nobleman for his son sick of a fever was heard and sent away with the assurance, "Go thy way, thy son liveth". The pitiful cry of the leper which met him after his sermon on the mount so moved him with compassion that he "stretched forth his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, 'I will be thou clean'".

His method of healing was influenced by the feelings and motives both of the afflicted and ^{of the} by-standers. He discerned the spiritual needs of men. When the man sick of the palsy born of four was let down through the roof, Jesus, discerning the needs of the man and the bitter feelings of the scribes and pharisees, openly declared, "Son thy sins are forgiven". And when his enemies accused him of blasphemy he rebuked them saying, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house."

Again, the healing of the man with a withered hand in the Synagogue of Capernaum, on the Sabbath, is a notable case of how the feelings and motives of men reacted upon the sensitive nature of Jesus. Perceiving the evil thoughts of the scribes and pharisees, he said to the man, "Stand forth". Then looking into the faces of his perverse critics, said, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save life or to kill? But they kept sullen and silent. The righteous indignation of Jesus was aroused, and he "looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart", and commanded the man to do what heretofore had been utterly impossible. "Stretch forth thy hand", said Jesus. "And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored".

At another time while at Capernaum Jesus was much moved by the faith of a certain centurian, the builder of the synagogue, who had a dear servant at the point of death. This centurian, hearing of Jesus, sent "elders of the Jews to Jesus asking him that he would come and save his servant. And Jesus went with them". But before Jesus reached the home the centurian sent word to him saying, "Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee:

but say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this and he doeth it." "That was a true man. There was nothing vain nor snobbish about that man. He did not represent the froth of popular society, but rather the heart of a true man. But the marvel of it all was that this pagan had far outstripped the Jews in his faith, especially with regard to our Lord's authority. It was this fact that made Jesus marvel and turn and say unto the multitudes, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!"

The three cases, in which Jesus raised the dead, show his divine compassion for sorrowing friends, viz., the restoring to a widowed mother of Nain an only son; and to Jairus the ruler of the synagogue of Capernaum an only daughter; and finally to Mary and Martha, the beloved Lazarus, an only brother.

The numerous miracles which Jesus wrought were not for spectacular display of his divine power, but rather were a response of his divine nature to an appeal from needy humanity. These responses, of course, served a double purpose. They revealed his divinity as well as his human sympathy. The faith of the woman who, for example, touched his garment in the throng was promptly recognized; and likewise the faith and humility of the Syrophenecian woman whose daughter he healed of an unclean spirit. The multitudes who followed Jesus and hung upon his words until they were almost ready to faint from physical exhaustion and hunger called forth his compassion at one time to feed the five thousand, and at another, four thousand.

Helplessness always appealed to Jesus: the disciples tossed on the Sea of Galilee, the deaf man with an "impediment in his speech", the epileptic, the woman bowed down with "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years", and the pitiable sight of the ten lepers, and the earnest appeal of the blind man near Jericho.

Thus the miracles of Jesus grew out of some effort on his part to meet some human need. Even his walking upon the boisterous waves of the Sea of Galilee, though at first distressing to his disciples, was to give them an assurance of his divine help. There is one notable exception, however, viz., the cursing of the figtree. Jesus saw in it a symbol of the deception of the hypocrite, who made an outward show of righteousness but bore no fruit in actual helpfulness to needy humanity.

There are certain principles found in human experience that never failed to appeal to the divine nature of Jesus. These were faith, love, earnestness, persistency, humility, desire for truth and willingness to embrace it, innocence, helplessness, and the cry of the distressed. Jesus was always sensitive to these key notes in human nature. He was as sensitive to these as the keys at a wireless station receiving their message across the troubled waters and through the thick fogs calling for help. These principles are the "C. Q. D." that call forth the divine powers for human rescue. They are the "Come quick, Danger!" signal that never fail to arouse the Divine Jesus.

While the miracles of Jesus called attention to his divine might and mercy, the teachings of Jesus called attention to his divine right and wisdom. The common people who had not their minds warped by intellectual dogmas of scribes and pharisees heard him gladly, and "wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth". Those who heard him preach the principles of his kingdom on the Mount "were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes".

The simplicity, clearness and directness of Jesus' teaching aimed right at the spirit of the law, and brushed aside all caviling and external pretensions of pharisaic ceremonialism. Professor Sheldon in his New Testament Theology has well said, "concerning this characteristic of Jesus, that "upon nothing did He so fix the imprint of scornful reprobation as upon the disposition to rate ceremonial scrupulosity above

above carefulness to fulfill the common duties springing out of the relations of man to man. To his mind this was a shabby, whitewashed substitute for religion, a lying semblance deserving the very acme of righteous indignation". The twenty third chapter of Matthew is a very vivid picture of how mercilessly Jesus scored the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees. Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity".

The teaching of Jesus was not only pure in its ethics, but it was palpitating with religious life. The throb of fellowship with the Father was felt with every truth uttered. A spiritual buoyancy and faith and peace permeated every message to the troubled soul. "Blessed, said Jesus, "are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." To the inquiring Nicodemus Jesus emphasized the spiritual side of the religious life., saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To the woman of Samaria at Jacob's Well he said, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth".

Although the teaching of Jesus was intensely spiritual, yet it was the Personality of Jesus that influenced and convinced men. The Samaritans, for example, when they had seen Jesus, testified to the woman of Samaria saying, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world". It was the personal contact of Jesus with men that won their love and faith. The Personality of Jesus Christ is absolutely

unique. He actually won men to believe in Him as the Son of God.

The mystery of his Personality charmed the multitudes, and angered the jealous scribes and pharisees who saw their pet theories torn down. Everywhere the multitudes, were inspired with profound expectation of some radical change in society and government. But the mystery of the Personality of Jesus could not be understood by his life alone. It was not until after he had been shamefully crucified and made a spectacle unto the whole world, and had risen again and appeared unto his disciples, that his Divinity became apparent. After his resurrection, his super-human control over space and time limitations, which were manifest in his appearances and disappearances at will, convinced the disciples, even doubting Thomas, of his Divinity.

It was in his transcendence of human limitations, and in his manifestation of ethical perfection that the ideal Personality of Jesus was revealed. And it was through this ideal Personality of Jesus in his ethical bearing toward humanity that the good will of the Heavenly Father toward humanity was revealed.

This brings us to the last division of our thesis viz., the divine presence of Jesus in our hearts attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit. As long as Jesus manifested himself to his disciples under human form it was impossible for them to realize the full intent of his mission to the world. But after he had thus ceased to manifest himself in the flesh, and had begun to manifest his presence through the operations of the Holy Spirit, the disciples got a clearer view of what Jesus meant, when he said, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This close relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son could only be understood in a spiritual sense, and not in a bodily sense. Therefore

if any adequate conception of this spiritual nearness was to be realized, it must be experienced within the spiritual human consciousness and not in mere sensuous presentation.

And it was not till the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews that the broader conception of the world wide mission of Jesus was realized. The special manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the early church evidently served the purpose of enlarging the spiritual vision of the disciples and of giving them a world wide interest in the Gospel of Jesus. It enabled them to see that all men are brothers and that God is our Father. The conception of the common brotherhood of man and the common Fatherhood of God was thus begun to be realized.

The condition of this fellowship and brotherhood is obedience to moral obligation and faith in God. The essential thing is to obey and trust rather than to seek for emotional confirmations. If the exultant emotion comes it is to be welcomed, but if not, still trust and obey. We are not commanded to have emotions but rather to obey. "He that hath my commandments," said Jesus, "and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him". At another time he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven".

We are in a human world, however, and none of us have perfect insight. We are all developing souls. Moreover, we are in a social world, and are therefore under obligation to society for much of our intellectual, religious, and moral attainments. We serve God by striving to up-build society. By improving the conditions of our fellowmen, we make it possible to better our own conditions. We may not enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ without sharing it with our fellowmen. Hence if we would have good will toward God we must exercise good will toward our fellow-men.

Jesus Christ has placed an ideal before us. If we would obey Jesus, the personation of our ideal, we must strive to realize his ideal plan for humanity. If our communion here with him and the Father is more or less clouded for lack of ideal conditions of self-realization, we have the assurance that, "in our Father's house are many mansions", and that Jesus the son "has gone to prepare a place for us that where he is there we may be also."

Thus he has set up for us a beacon light of hope of spiritual life to go on under improved conditions in a world to come. And in so doing saves this world, with its un-ideal conditions, from despair, and makes hope and progress possible.

By his Incarnation he has come infinitely near us in divine sympathy with all our human woes: by his life, death, and resurrection he has come infinitely near us in divine love and mercy: and finally by His Holy Spirit he has come infinitely near us in our spiritual consciousness by divine communion. But in all this passion to approach men and reveal his love and will he still respects our humanity. He in no way interferes with the law of our being. He does not cancel the law of human knowledge and replace it by divine illumination, but rather illuminates our human understanding according to the laws of human experience. He does not cancel our wills by coercion, but rather reveals to us through the understanding the awful consequences of disobedience, and the blessed satisfying result of obedience. His sympathy, his love and mercy, and his spiritual presence is in the highest sense ideal. But the realization of this ideal depends upon the human understanding and will. The responsibility of disseminating this knowledge of the perfect ideal rests upon those who have been instructed. And the responsibility of its reception and realization rests upon the will of the individual himself. Thus we are made co-workers together with God in the great revelation of the Gospel for the realization of his spiritual human kingdom. To this high calling and blessed

privilege we are forever indebted to our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Ideal.