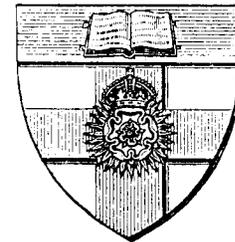


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THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY MEMBERS OF  
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London: University of London Press  
PUBLISHED FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON PRESS, LTD.  
BY HODDER & STOUGHTON, WARWICK SQUARE, E.C.

1911

ESSAY V

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE

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## SYNOPSIS

The question—Its genesis, statement and dimensions.

Its origin with Lessing for modern times—his twofold principle that both the actual condition and the essential nature of historical truth forbid us to associate with it absoluteness or finality.

Examination of this position. Its modification by the modern religious historical school, which is more ideal and sympathetic. Troeltsch—correction of Hegel.

Its ethical emphasis on personality, and its democratic jealousy of any single person.

The truth and value of this school. Its defect. It simply substitutes one principle for another—it does not adjust principle to personality; and it substitutes moral process for moral action, so that personality is over-ridden, and history is more of a movement than a drama.

A principle cannot do the things morally distinctive of a person, and especially things essential to religion; which is not simply relation to God but communion.

The tendency is to Monism, with its defective ethic, whenever the spiritual principle is not identified with a person. When Christ is called the guarantee of the Christian principle this really concedes His identity with it.

The effect of the theory of historical evolution on religion summarised.

False forms of Christianity provoke and necessitate protest—which however is but partially, and often but poorly, true. The real issue at this moment.

N.B.—It may be an aid to clearness if it is explained here that by Christ is meant the historic Jesus as the Eternal and Only Begotten Son of God, and by the Christian principle the idea of sonship taken religiously as the sonship of Humanity, native and inalienable however man may behave, and not secured by a moral redemption in Christ alone and for ever. The principle of personality is not essential to it, and not necessarily Eternal for individuals. In the one case Man is God's son in his freeborn right, in the other for Christ's sake alone.

## CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE

CAN an historical person be the object of an absolute faith? Can a human personality at once express absolute Godhead and exercise a true Humanity? In one form or another that is the modern question which it is vital to Christianity to answer, and to answer positively and securely.

It is a question which arises partly from our modern interest in Humanity as one, partly from our new concern with its several stages; partly, that is, from our new sense of the Idea, and partly from the evolutionary tendency to judge everything relatively to the standard of its own age alone. We do not want to judge, indeed we shrink from going beyond explanation. The same motive as makes us tender with the vices of a mediæval monarch, because he must be measured by his contemporary standard and not ours, makes us also sceptical about the holy finality of Jesus Christ. The same tendency as whitewashes the sinners takes the glory from the saints. As the world cools, things tend to an equalisation of temperature. The historic mind, it is said, which does not allow us to apply a modern code of ethics to a cruder time, forbids us also to find in any age what would entirely satisfy modern needs, to say nothing of dominating all possible ideals. History, it is said, not only carries home to us, with the eighteenth century, the vast organic unity of Humanity, but, with the nineteenth, reveals the action of evolution as ruling all that takes place; and it is therefore impossible to fix upon any one point in the past, and so to isolate it from the great stream as to give it an absolute value for every age of a race so vast. The twofold idea of the unity of history and

of its movement as evolution affects religion far more than the once dreaded uniformity of nature.

Especially is this so, it is urged, with one like Jesus. He belongs to the past (it is said) in everything except influence; for the present He has not final authority; and He may be surpassed in the future. We can no more deify an historic person than we can crystallise an historic stage, or stereotype an historic creed. No man, indeed, it is allowed, has had such an influence on posterity as Jesus; but He has created a Frankenstein Humanity, which now escapes from His control, and turns to question, and even to dissect, its creator. Jesus had not to deal with an age like ours, an age with our knowledge of the past, and our rights over it. He belongs to the past which we command, and He must accept the same criticism as all the rest of the past from the age of historical science. We cannot allow Him absolute authority in any region, sensitive though we have grown to His spell. We may feel Christ more, but we worship Him less. And we contemplate with calm a remote future when His influence will cease, because it will have done its work and been replaced by other influences giving us all His best and more. We are told that if Christianity is to continue to be a religion when that time comes, it must be detached from all control by the past, though, of course, not from its causation, or even inspiration. It must be detached from Christ in the sense of being made independent of Him, except as He may be considered the prophet or symbol either of Humanity or of a long stage in the human career. The ideal Christ must be loosed and let go from the historic. Time, which was once His home, is now His tomb. We must, indeed, for long (till Nietzsche supersedes Him) continue to hold the Christian principle of our sonship, but that is independent of its temporary connection with the personality of Christ. Most Christians now admit that a distinction has to be made between the passing and the permanent elements in traditional faith. The question is where the line must be drawn. And among the passing elements, it is said, among the

beneficent but terminable illusions, we must include the deity of Christ, and the absolute, final, decisive value of His person and work for our relation to God and our eternal destiny.

Now it should be realised at the outset how far this deposition goes. With a supernatural and final Christ goes a permanent Church, and all its intimate involution in history. The Church has meaning only if the Christian principle is inseparable from the eternal person of Christ. The Church exists and endures in the faith that the principle if detached from the work and person of such a Christ would not have power to keep afloat in such a world; that Christ was not the organ or crystallisation of a principle, but that the principle is the explication of His person and the result of His work; that Christ did not regard Himself or His work relatively (for with all His humility He never contemplated being superseded); nor was that how He has been construed by those who knew Him best, whether at the first or in the long history of the soul. On that the Church stands. And when the Church passes, the note of spiritual religion must alter. Its great manner of mastery over fate, chance, and change, will pass. Its attitude towards the world will be different; it will be less secure. The religious principle of man's divine sonship will not give that certainty of the Father which the Church's faith in the Son does. It may be noted also, that as the faith in Christ retires the "religion of Jesus" retires too. For the very historical reality of Jesus is now denied by the untrammelled evolution of criticism, to say nothing of His personal religion; and a totally different religion, fitted with all modern appliances and conveniences, takes its place as the religion of Monism. Christ comes to be viewed as the mythical symbol of a priceless idea, which is the real inspiration of religion. But in its own account of itself Christianity is not the expression of an idea. It did not so enter history. It does not condense and point a natural process in the spiritual region. It does not even

incarnate the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures. Philosophemes like that cannot make a religion. They did not exude Christianity as a popular metaphysic. That Hegelian version of Christianity has served its day and fallen on sleep. And one reason why we think the Christian principle inadequate without the person of Christ is that the old life and work is found at last to ebb and fade without the old faith. We do not continue to get the Christian ethic or the Christian philanthropy without the Christian creed. A religion of Christian principle is inadequate, after a generation or two, to the work done in Christ, and needing always to be done, for such a world as this—the work of its Redemption, even from fate, to say nothing of sin. It might explain well enough the power of the God-consciousness in Christ as an individual saint, or among certain of His fellow-Christians. It would explain Christ as the filial completion of man's sense of God. It might even explain Him as a healer of souls. But it would not explain Him as Saviour. It would place Him among those whom the action of the principle saved, among His fellow sinners and pensioners of God's grace. But it does not meet the moral case of the world, or pacify the conscience really quickened and grieved. It would explain redemption as the action of an idea or an influence, or view it as the completion of Humanity when it bursts into flower and takes the full air of heaven; but it would not treat it as God's work, as a moral achievement and historic victory of a crucial kind in the region of man's prime need, on the scale of the race's experience and guilt. The meaning of guilt it always minimises. It protests, with a modern scholar, of singular eminence in the American Church, against the idea that "because one man feels his need of divine grace therefore all men must need it." But the New Testament surely regards this as the prime, universal, and eternal need which Christ came to meet. And that intimately personal saving work is possible to a person alone. Here, as often, we see how indispensable the work of Christ is for approach to any true interpretation of His person.

Few thinkers are so luminous in their treatment of Christian theology as Ed. von Hartmann, and none more thoroughly destroy its foundations than he does with his deification of the Unconscious. But this is what he says on the subject in hand: "Christianity stands or falls with faith in the foundation of a new cosmopolitan religion of redemption by Jesus, and in the identity of this historic Jesus with the later idea of a Christ, *i. e.* with the divine principle of redemption. None who view these as historic fictions have any further right to the Christian name" (Preface to 10th edition of *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten*).

The principle of Lessing, that historical truth has nothing final, and affords no warrant for absolute truth, has sunk so deep into the modern mind that it is worth while to examine it somewhat closely. Historical truth, Lessing and his school said, cannot prove the supreme truths of Christianity for two reasons. First, because the Christian record is not complete. Even as history it is defective. The evidence would not satisfy a jury of historical experts. At some of the most crucial points the data are lacking. We have nothing directly from Jesus Himself. We have from no eye-witness firsthand and tested evidence of an act so central as the Resurrection. We are also unable to reconstruct with complete confidence and modern effect the psychology of Christ, the pragmatism of His action, the motivation, or even the sequence, of His proceedings, or the context of His sayings. But, second (they said), if the record were complete yet it would not be effective for the purpose in hand, because the two kinds of truth are disparate. Historical truth is, by its nature, relative and accidental; whereas the final truth of religion must be absolute. Mere probability, which is all that history can reach, cannot be the basis of absolute religious faith. The soul cannot stake its eternal destiny, or cherish a complete and final certainty, on anything which is only settled by a balance of evidence, as history must be. An absolute faith cannot rest on a probable base. A faith

which rests but on the probable has a root of sceptical bitterness which is sure to trouble it at last; and it is by so much the less faith. To faith's demand for absolute certainty history can offer but the probable. The only correlate of faith is God (when we use care about words), and faith in Christ must therefore mean that Christ is God. But a probable God is no God. Yet a probable God is the most that mere history permits in connection with Jesus. There is, therefore, a great gulf fixed between an historic figure and an absolute faith, so that none can pass to and fro. Hence the *penchant* of our critic-racked age for a mystic religion, or an ideal Christ, interior and superior to history and its sceptics. "*Spernit Humum fugiente penna*"—as Ferrier quotes and puns.

It is worth while, perhaps, to cross-examine the chief witness. The exact words of Lessing are these: "Accidental truths of history can never be proof of necessary truths of reason." First, it may be observed how awkward, how ambiguous, how archaic is the expression "truths of history." It is not the truths of history that we have chiefly to do with now but its facts, and especially their nature. But Lessing belongs to a bygone day of noetic and propositional religion. Its orthodoxy was but the intellectualism of the right, its heresy the intellectualism of the left. Christianity was to him and his age a matter of truth more than of life, act, or power, and facts were but empirical; none could be super-historic, none sacramental. He belonged to the time when Rationalism, with a negative doxy, was attacking the positive orthodoxy in what is really a family quarrel. Both were entangled in the error that revelation was a matter of belief rather than of personal relation in living faith. But for us now, with our wider knowledge and deeper grasp of all religions, Christianity is not a complex of truths, either accidental or necessary, about God; it is a new and vital relation toward God, effected by Himself.

The second fallacy in Lessing's words is that history, by its very nature, contains only the accidental and probable.

On the contrary, history is now seen to be in its nature sacramental, if only sacramental of an Eternal making for righteousness. Its facts are consecrated elements. They are conductors of the Eternal. At least for the psychology of religion it is so; and religion is now allowed to speak for itself, without a rational editor or chaperon. Such religion finds the core of history to be an act of God which is anything but accidental. As a matter of fact, rightly or wrongly, history *has* yielded to the soul a God in an historic act which is in its nature eternal. And with that tremendous faith running through history and spreading over it, it is not enough that criticism should declare the sources incapable of producing it, and write it off as an illusion with a stroke. Rigid historical science cannot extract all that history has to yield, any more than physical science can be the complete hierophant of Nature. The scientific critic dogmatizes if he says it yields no more than he finds, or no other dimension. His methods apply only to the accidental, empirical, relative element, which is not the whole of history. His machine only extracts the tin and leaves the radium in the debris. The words of both Lessing and Kant on this subject reveal them as antagonists only to an outgrown conception of religion, to a view of Christianity which regards it as a scientific system of truth made statutory for subsequent generations, and made also, in that form, a condition of future happiness. It all smacks of an age and a mood which is bygone, except in those marts where men deal in the cast-off clothing of generations ago, or those paths where the ghosts of dead ages walk the dim purlieus of the living mind. The sympathetic study of all religions shows that there are parts of the past so timeless in their inner nature that they can become parts also of our own personal consciousness. It is so, at least, that the Christian learns Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To be quite just, I admit this represents but one side, the conscious side, whether of Lessing or of Kant. They have another, which however becomes explicit chiefly in their successors. Both represent the great transition from the dogmatic to the critical era. But it was to a criticism that had in it the conditions of a new dogmatic, with a moral instead

But Lessing's theme tends to recur in a new setting at the hands of the current religious-historical school, led so brilliantly and sympathetically by Troeltsch, with his principle of the relative absoluteness of Christianity. Historical religion, he says, does give us the absolute, but in each faith only in a relative way, which is fatal to any unique position for it. In many quarters it is held almost needless to prove a principle so evident as the relativism of history. Nor, it is said, should we wish it otherwise. For it is even asserted that the effect of the application of the relative principle to religion is not only to make religion more rational, but more rich in its truth, more ethical, more human, more intimate, and more religious really, because nearer our actual case. The relativist principle in this more sympathetic form is held and pressed by men who yet cherish a deep reverence for Christ's person as the first, and still the classic, case of the true religion of divine fatherhood and human sonship. Hegel went so far as to say that in Jesus and His results the absolute became conscious of itself. We are bound to recognise at this point the unprecedented insight we have gained into the character

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of an intellectual foundation, and, with a place at once more modest and more powerful in Humanity. Lessing is, perhaps, the supreme type still of the creative critic. He was, indeed, limited by the then state of historic study and the then analysis of moral and theological ideas. But he did grasp, as none before, the essence of Humanity; and he grasped that essence as action. He prepared the way for Kant, and, through him, for the moral, instead of the mystical—or the noetic—escape from the confusion caused by historical criticism. In so doing they threw the accent on the personal side as distinct from the principle, and they opened a new career for evangelical Christianity delivered from Orthodoxy and from Pietism. In viewing the work of Christ as the supreme and compendious moral act in history, thought places it at the creative centre of the new Humanity; and by making the true Christianity to be communion with this moral Re-creator it saves mysticism from the æsthetic for the moral experience. The result of this changed method upon the central doctrines of Christianity, and their restoration to the conscience, and so to the race, I have tried to express in certain volumes upon *The Person of Christ*, *The Work of Christ*, and *The Cruciality of the Cross* (Hodder & Stoughton). They represent an attempt to place evangelical belief, which has been accused of violating morals, upon an impregnable moral basis; inasmuch as Kant's moral principle, that supreme action is doing the right for right's sake alone, appears in the crowning work of Christ as the self-oblation of the Holy One to His own holiness.

of Jesus and the doctrines of the Church from the sympathetic labour and the divining scholarship of many powerful men, who yet cut the ground from the Christian Church and faith by resting them ultimately, not upon Jesus, but upon the ideas and principles for which Jesus stood either as sponsor, or as symbol. The sonship of man and the fatherhood of God, they hold, are permanent intuitions, which are only historically connected with Jesus. And this historical connection with His person is irrelevant at last to final conviction on the principle; so that the conviction would grow and flourish now, with the historic "way" it has accumulated, even if Jesus were forgotten. The spiritual truth itself would spread among men by its own appeal to human nature, apart from Him who historically introduced it, who first realised it completely in His human experience, and who fixed it for ever in the religious consciousness of the race. Christ was indeed the way, but we may forget the road when we reach home. It is even said that He Himself, in His old humility, would wish it so thought if He were among us now. He would not care whether He were remembered or not, so long as the object of His life was won—man's filial trust of a living Father in an Eternal Kingdom. The certainty that the Great Power is Father is declared to be a matter of the spiritual experience and its intuitional witness, which, when it is as real and clear as Christianity can make it, may always be trusted to report the same Father as Jesus so clearly and surely realised in the name of Humanity at its best. If He had not done so, some other would. The Christian principle can now hold its own, whatever we may come to think of the person of Christ or His work.

The weakness of such a position is that it must rest on a certain psychological interpretation of our spiritual experience, and it has against its forecast of the future the whole experience of the Church of the past (*i. e.* of the initiates and experts of the soul); and especially the profound psychology of conscience and sin by the great Reformers, who, however they parted from the rest of the

Church as to the remedy, were at one with it in the diagnosis of the case, because they were legatees of the Church's long penitential tradition.

Of late years the Hegelian line of thought has not seemed so sure in the land of its origin as it did two generations ago. With the decay of the philosophy of speculative Idealism there has come a distrust of the great truths of the reason, or at least of their power to shine by their own light. God, Freedom, Immortality are, of course, secure enough in æsthetic or sentimental circles, and in the region of the domestic pieties, where the heart rises dramatically, like a man in wrath, against the reason's colder part, ends the case, and crushes the critic with "I have felt." This shows how subjective, how individual, how dilettantist the current conception of the problem is, how little it is conceived as the problem of the world. But where there is a more serious and more historic grasp of the situation, with a more adequate sense of the difficulties involved, where there is a due knowledge of problems, and especially a grasp of the world problem, then the happier intuitions of a literary and pectoral theology are not found sufficient for the race's eternal committal, and for an absolute faith that nothing possible can shake. And, if we turn to the philosophers, whereas the ideas used to be their own assurance, by what Hegel calls "the intuition of thought" at the cost of personality, the tendency of recent thinking has been to recall personality and its moral effect to a much more important place. Personality has come, even for philosophy, to mean more than it did when it was treated but as the vehicle of ideas in a mere accidental and detachable way, as the pipe conveys the water, or the "sacred penman" the inspiration. The personality is now coupled up with the principle, not as its duct, or its penman, but as its prophet. They interpenetrate in a far more organic way, as the current suffuses the wire, or the fire lives on the fuel, or the mind in the brain. This change has come about as thought has grown more ethical, more psychological, more sympathetic, and less intellectualist, as Kant has

discrowned Aristotle in the realm of mind. We begin to hope that a personal Idealism is about to restore the kingdom to Israel, as far as any philosophy can contribute to that end, and to help the recovery of our old faith in the personal finality of Christ.

But just at this point thought swerves, under the influence of a cross-current which is also modern, and, for some, final—the final formula, they think, at last—the doctrine (or rather the dogma) of evolution. Just as personality seemed about to step back to the throne of things its supremacy is challenged (or qualified at least) by Evolutionary Relativism. If the parable may be indulged, this mighty angel, with one foot on the earth and another on the sea, commanding all nature, proclaims his profound respect for the dynasty of Personality as hereditary suzerain of the cosmos, but his inability, at the same time, to allow any single member of it to mount the throne in perpetuity. No single personality must have eternal monopoly, no single king live for ever. Even were personality immortal, no single representative of it must be secured in eternal reign. For that would not consist with the relative principle. Immortal as the principle of personality or kingship might be, no particular personality of history could be absolute or final. He could be no more than a terminal president. And whoever for the hour took the throne must give constitutional guarantee that, as his resources began to fail, or when a greater personality arose, he would abdicate, consent to be superseded by a more spiritual right, and pass from the scene, or gladly take his place among the subjects of the larger lord. If it was Jesus that was placed upon the throne, the noble champion avowed with earnest tones his deep reverence and loyalty to His moral Majesty; but in the greatest of interests he could consent to His royal place only with a proviso which relativists could not forgo. It could not be allowed that He was an eternal King, or a King of all possible kings. For there were constitutional

principles, bound up with the very existence of the realm of human nature, which were not dependent on any single personality (nay, they were imperilled by it), deeply as they were entwined with the personal or regal idea. Redemption as a process, for instance, was of more range and moment than any redeemer could be, and the particular monarch was otiose to the constitution.

The form of thought that I have ventured to describe in this parable is much more attractive than the line pursued by the old rationalists of the association school. It allows to personality a function higher than merely to convey the idea; and it finds personality more interesting than the idea. We are attracted also by the prospect of finding some means, however inadequate, of coupling them closer, and having the benefit of both. But really the new line is little more satisfactory than the old. For, if we do not concentrate on a single absolute person, are we not dissolving with one hand the connection we would cement with the other? To return to our metaphor, if it is only the dynasty we enthrone, the category of personality, and not a particular person, what are we doing but restoring the supremacy of the personal principle, of the idea of personality, and making a particular personality indifferent? We have only replaced a principle by a principle, a principle which is associated with personality by the principle of personality itself. And the result for faith, for religion, is not very different in the long run. What we come out with at last is the worship of ideal Humanity and the spiritual principle it embodies. We postpone personality and its moral action to a monistic power and its processes. We find movements promoted which, with the aid of extreme criticism, throw Jesus into a secondary place, and promise practically to dispense with Him, or historically to dissolve Him, on the ground that the great Christian ideas, like Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Ascension, Regeneration, are not specific acts of God in history but movements intrinsic to collective Humanity, valuable indeed, but well assured to us as processes of man's native

and inalienable spirituality at its best. Man makes his own atonement, and Christ but illustrated the fact. Man does not rise by the Spirit that raised Christ, but Christ rose by the spirit that elevates man. These ideas, these experiences, are the necessary movements, phases, or effects of our spiritual evolution, which cannot be holden of death; they are not the contents of an historic revelation and act in Christ, on which alone our reborn spirituality must revolve. It may be questioned (in passing), and with some force, whether it is quite fair to use the New Testament words and ideas in this bleached and emptied sense. It may be said, with some truth, that a change from being theocentric to being anthropocentric means a new religion. It is, indeed, engaging and enlarging to the mind to mark these processes in human nature, as the premonitions of that which Christ fulfilled, and which He secured in final victory; just as it interests and expands us to mark the same thing in the convergence upon Him of other religions, and especially of those gnostic mythologies which lay round the cradle of Christianity. They were prayers that called for Christ, rather than powers that produced Him, and they are much truer as prayers than as powers. They were prayers that He had to answer rather than principles which He had to serve. They were, and are, impotent without Him. We may prize them as prophecies. But it is another thing to make them the prime movers, with Christ and His action but their classic case. That is not Christianity. At least it is not apostolic Christianity. It is certainly not the faith that made the Church. And it is practically another religion. Would it not be much more fair and fertile plainly to recognise this, and then go on to ask which of the two religions better met the facts of history, the record of experience, and the needs of the soul. Neither old truth nor new has anything to gain from confusing the issue.

Let us not refuse the truth which is so luminous to many of those teachers that it seems to them final. Let us not discard the spell of their ideal Christ, or deny the composite

nature of some of His early theological photographs. Let us not despise their reverence for Humanity, even if we cannot adopt their faith in it. (For reverence is one thing and faith quite another.) The ideal yet human Christ of the modern age is, in its place, a real contribution to the enlargement of our thought of Christ, if the thought of Him were all. It corresponds to the step taken when, through the Reformation, a near God replaced a far; when God's relation to the world began to be something more than accidental, when it became organic; when the world ceased to be thought of as one of several possible to God, when it became His form instead of even His garment, and a theology of immanence began to supplement and enlarge the mediæval theology of transcendence alone. Let us consent to learn from all we are told about the greatness of the Christian principle, and its supremacy to every other spiritual principle found up to now in the soul of man. We may then gain some hope of a fundamentally Christian ethic replacing a pagan in our chief centres of education. Let us, moreover, recognise the contributions that may have been made to the *form* of the first Christian theology by the theologoumena of either Judaism or Gnosticism. St. Paul incorporated several of these into his thought of the riches of Christ, adopting even some of the technical phraseology of these schools, as every reader of Colossians knows if he continues to assign it to St. Paul. I see no reason why, if it were proved, we should not recognise that St. Paul had a Christology before he was a Christian, and might even have believed in a Messiah pre-existent in the heavens. He did believe in a celestial Jerusalem, pre-existent as the Temple, the Law, or the Memra was also thought to be; and He might have shared a like belief as to the Messiah, if such a belief had existed. Which, however, both Bousset and Dalman seem to doubt. As they well might; for to a Monotheist Jew the pre-existence beside the one God of a person like Messiah would be a far more serious matter than the pre-existence either of law, angel, temple, or city of God. But, speaking generally, I see no reason why

Paul should not have utilised the ideas of other religions than either Judaism or Christianity, to fill out and express what he found in Christ. But they did not base his faith, or produce it. In Christ they all fell into place, and were gathered together in one. Christ was the answer to their prayers. He stored in advance all possible treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ all high ideals and moving principles were from eternity real and effectual. In Him they came back to their home. And therefore in Him they became not only powers in history but, what is the real point, they became *the* powers. They were put once for all in eternal command of history and man. Their final, visible victory, in due course, was secure, because they shared his secure place in God. They became invincible as the Kingdom of God. The æonial issue of light and darkness, life and death, good and evil, grace and sin, was settled for ever in principle on the battlefield of Christ's person. And final omnipotence was secured, by that person, for a redeeming principle which, however divine we may now call it, but for this victory might, for all we knew, have succumbed to some stronger malignant power ere all was done and the long historic strife closed. Fixed in that faith, we need be no more unsympathetic to the ideals of our age than Paul the aged was to those of his. Unless, indeed, they aspire to thrust the living Christ from His throne and sit there. Then they threaten the Church's life, as the old Gnosticism did. It becomes a struggle for existence. And our attitude might have to become that of John rather than Paul, because it is John's situation and not Paul's that we face.

The chief practical objection to putting a principle in front of a person is that the religious life thereby becomes a one-sided process rather than a mutual act, an evolution rather than a communion; and thus it loses its ethical value, and is relegated to the pensive and passive side of our nature. And when religion does that it practically goes out of life. The difference between a

principle and a person is the difference between a process and an act, between a man that is carried and a man that goes. It is that the person has will and purpose towards some conscious act and end, while the principle moves but in a current which may be blind (because it does not certify its own goal), which bears us along on its course, and tends to submerge moral action and choice. Our very choice of a principle becomes then but part of the action of the principle, and our freedom is gone in a determinism the more fatal as it is subtle, and even religious. It is true our best faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. But it is His gift, not in the crude sense that we are flooded, overborne and carried along on the current of something infused into our nature, but in the sense that it is the destined, yet not fated, response of our free will and conscience to the gift of God in a personal Christ who is morally calculated to affect us so since we were created in Him. The Eternal Life is not an infusion whereby we are coupled to a source and charged anew. That is a psychology of it which leads to magical religion, and the whole Roman theory of the sacraments; and it means a religion that turns upon something else than moral personal relations direct and reciprocal. But Grace is a relation of divine mercy, and not a process of high natural magic spiritualised. The new life is ours by a moral action and reaction, our moral reaction to the prior, moral, and gracious action of a God whose *will* is our peace. So that it is more exact to say that the gift of God is not the faith directly but that Christ who stirs the faith. It is the faith only indirectly, in the sense of our personal response to a Person's gift of Himself in a Person. If the principle be the main thing, then mutual personal action falls to a second place, and communion in the true Christian sense too easily sinks to be fusion in the mystic sense. Regeneration becomes at best a mere awaking to feel that we are partakers of a divine nature. And it is a process through which Christ Himself must also have gone. He becomes the greatest of all regenerates. Redemption,

which has Christian meaning only as an act, becomes a process of increasingly pantheistic and Buddhist character, including and blessing the Redeemer Himself. It is the release of the infinite from the finite, the process of absorption in the larger ideal, mere delivery from the limitations, causations, and controls of a hampering world; instead of being God's destruction of guilt by forgiveness, His new creation and restoration of us to moral communion with His holy Self. History becomes but movement, hardly action, and not at all a drama. It is a mere procession to a grand final panorama; unless indeed it ends in the redemption and release of the Absolute Being Himself, through the aid of man's ascetic sacrifice, from that most original fall wherein "He darkly blundered on man's suffering soul." And with all this the conception of sin accords. It becomes merely the most unfortunate form of our limitation, but it need not carry with it guilt. It is a back-water of the great current of process; it is not an act of the will's hostility or alienation towards a holy God. And the effect at last is that the principle, being detached from the person (except historically), sinks: it sinks either to truth of a divine kind, so that its revelation, as the communication of divine doctrines, is some kind of orthodoxy—a notion of revelation now well outgrown—or else it falls lower still and becomes but the manifestation of a fine sort of cosmic force, the flood of a stream of living water, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of whatever rules as God, and carrying us on its bosom, almost without action of ours (however much motion), to be lost in the infinite sea. In either case the dominant type of religion acquires a pantheistic and non-ethical cast rather than a theistic and moral. The principle may employ personality or drop it. It may appear and act as a personality, but always so that the person returns to be merged in it. And a person not identical with the principle could even preach it in a most powerful way and yet find his real personality satisfied elsewhere; or he might renounce it at a later date, and go on to another, and even contrary principle. But what we

need is not a principle any more than it is a dogma. Principle-worship is but the modern form of dogma-worship. What we want is life from a life, conscience with conscience, and soul to soul. But what we get in a speculative system of interacting ideas and principles is a result like this. "The fathomless wealth of God's thought and act is reduced to the monotonous echo of an ontological machine in systole and diastole, pulse and counterpulse, thrill and chill."

We may, perhaps, put it thus: Religion must be not only subjectively sincere but objectively real. That is to say it must rest on a real objective, and one possessing the initiative to which faith responds. Religion is meaningless without something in the nature of revelation. There can be no real religion on man's side towards anything which is but the projection, or the consummation, of Humanity itself. The object of religion must approach its subject creatively. But if that objective be construed as a mere immanent principle, patent only as the various spiritual processes subjective to Humanity, like incarnation, atonement or regeneration, where does a real objective for the race and its religion lie? What is really initiative and creative? Of course, if Humanity is regarded, in the positivist way, as itself the divine reality, it has, collectively, no object of religion. Religion becomes but one of its subjective phases. Its initiative is in itself. Believing Humanity is its own object of faith. It is the object of its own worship. And the religion of individual altruism is a collective egoism on the vastest scale. Or if, pantheistically, Humanity be regarded as part or phase of a more cosmic reality, its experiences are still not more than phases. They, too, are but phases or processes of reality, they are not responses to it. They are parts of its huge subjectivity. And religion, then, is not the relation of Humanity to anything real, but a mere phenomenon on the face of reality, having no necessary or eternal connection with its nature. The principle asserts or expresses itself in many forms, but it meets with response not at all.

Humanity is a phase of reality, it does not greet reality. There is no revelation, and therefore no religion is possible.

But how, then, shall we secure a religious reality behind these experiences, processes, or ideas of ours? How shall we know they correspond to anything in reality, anything ultimate, and supreme, and victorious? How shall we get moral, holy, footing in the region behind good and bad? How shall we know that love or goodness in man mean the same thing in the region of the last reality? Is moral difference rooted in the Eternal? It has no religious, no eternal, value unless it is. Now there are various philosophical ways of answering this question, turning on theories of knowledge; but the theological answer is this—that the historic revelation in Christ is that the real is what we know as the transcendently moral, the holy. That is the meaning of the Incarnation. How the Church reaches that certainty opens two very great questions, as to the value of inspiration and the value of Christian experience. They are questions that evoke powerful answers, but they cannot be discussed here. The real, we say, is the moral, the historic. But now, if we work from the other end, and apart from such a revelation, can we say that the moral is the real, that the loving, the sacrificing is the real and eternal? Can we be sure that these moral idealisms or principles in history are upon the rock of permanent being? Can we be quite sure that moral excellence, which is at present the crown of things, will be permanent, victorious and eternal, apart from its establishment and re-establishment by a Personality, Holy and Almighty? Can a principle secure itself or prove itself to be Eternal? And if it cannot, can it be a base for religion in the great last sense of the word—a stay in the crash of a cosmos, or amid the collapse of our own self-satisfaction in guilt? Can a principle really reveal itself in any such way that a whole person can respond, and can respond with himself? We can respond as persons to a person, and we can discover a principle, or be taught it by a person, and we can acknowledge it; but can a principle *act* on us? Can a

principle act in the moral sense of the word? Has it in it what constitutes the essence of personality? Can it create? Has it the power of self-determination? Has a supreme principle necessarily the power of absolute self-determination? Many minds are embarrassed, when the question of an absolute personality arises, by the fallacy that the essential feature of personality is limitation, that personality is no more than individuality—something marked off by a circumference from all else. Whereas the essence of personality is not that it is a closed circle, but that it is a radiative centre of power, of moral power, and especially in the way of self-command. A personality is a power that is lord of itself. It is not a power made personal by its limitations, whether in its volume, or in its spiritual energies, but a power that has in itself the secret of its own control. It is a power with self-determination and self-sufficiency. From this point of view there is nothing unthinkable in an absolute personality. With us personality is never a finished thing, but a thing in constant growth; and it is an error to treat it as a complete, limited, and standard thing, and then proceed to declare an infinite personality impossible. It is really the only form in which we can conceive intelligence or spiritual life—infinite self-knowledge, self-sufficiency, and self-determination. But a principle can have none of these. Its action is not self-determined, and therefore it is not moral. Therefore it cannot really act in the way of self-bestowal, self-revelation. It cannot reveal itself in any such way as to appeal to our moral personality and master it.

A person can by free action give or reveal himself to a person, and to a person he can also reveal a principle. But can a principle reveal itself to a person, if we really grasp what is deeply meant by revelation? Can there be any self-determined and free self-revelation on the part of a principle to evoke all that is free in our personality? Has it such initiative? Self-revelation, beginning as it must in free self-determination, is an act, a personal act; but is a principle capable of anything beyond movement in a

process? It can assert itself, establish itself, absorb, overbear, organise, or submerge all else, like other forces—but can it reveal itself, bestow itself, open its inmost self and final purpose? It can develop itself, but can it save? It can produce resignation, can it win reconciliation? Can it provide a worship for man, who, as a conscience, needs forgiveness more than evolution? If it is but a principle that we have to do with at last can we speak of revelation, at least in any such sense of saving self-donation as Christ has taught us to associate with revelation? A person can reveal a principle, but not a principle a person. Is it not debasing a person, and robbing it of personality, to make it explicable as the vortex of a principle, as an atom might be a knot of ether? For a principle is not free in any moral sense. Moral freedom vanishes if it is treated but as a kink in a principle. A principle does not carry in itself its own origin or explanation. It may be a cause, an essence, the unity of a system, a uniformity of procedure, a universal, an idea, a notional ultimate, a logical solution—one of many things, which are all below a free and originating person in moral dignity and worth for life. It may explain much, but it initiates nothing. It organises, but it does not create. It is more of a terminus for thought than a source of life. It may order a world, but it does not love, nor is it loved. It may be owned, but neither obeyed nor worshipped. It cannot keep religion the personal thing it must be. And it can never effect what is the Christian relation to God, personal communion. Than this there can be nothing higher; and nothing less than this is the fulness of Christianity; which is not contact with God, impression from Him, or influence either from a God or a principle; but life-communion with the Eternal. This is only possible with a living person. And the faith that effects it is absolute and final.

No such mere principle can be the ground of a religion adequate to the highest practical purposes of a world of living men, or to the actual moral situation

of such a world. It is not equal to the great tragedies, resolves, actions or consciences of a race of loving, acting, suffering, struggling, failing, conquering souls. It must have its sponsor and guarantee in a revelation by a moral person who holds of the last reality, and who is secured in a final moral conquest of such life and fate. For a world of men a man is the only fitting form of revelation. And the only question, then, is whether a man is a possible form of revelation for God; whether the great last Reality is so moral in His nature as to exist *in nuce* in a perfect moral manhood.

It may here be noted that the tendency to detach the principle from the person mostly goes with a tendency to reduce to something monistic the essence of God as well as of Christianity. And at its root is an easy confusion between the idea of immanence and that of incarnation; as if the divine Incarnation in Christ were but the luminous summit of an intrinsic divine immanence, *ejusdem generis*, in the constitution of Humanity; as if Humanity were the real Son of God, with Christ as its most conspicuous individual case. But the Christian principle is not immanence, which is a philosopheme with little direct value for personal religion. It does not become religious till we are clearly sure that we mean *the immanence of the transcendent*. The principle of Christ's relation to man is not a natural identity by constitution. We can say little about that. But it is a self-identification by will, by Christ's eternal act of self-emptying and self-bestowal. A Christ who was the culmination of a divine immanence in Humanity might complete a process of divine self-realisation, but He would not perform an act of divine self-renunciation—meaning by divine such an act on the part of God. Principles may realise themselves, but persons alone can renounce themselves. A self-realising Christ would not carry self-sacrifice into God, as the act does which brought Christ here; which also underlies all the detailed acts of self-sacrifice in His earthly career, and which makes man's self-

sacrifice in union with Him to be not merely Godlike, but really divine, "I live, yet not I but Christ in me."

Hence it is a defective ethic that works out of immanental theories even when Christian. They identify sin with selfishness in a one-sided and negative way. They ignore its positive aspect of hostility to God and aggression on Him. They invite sacrifice for others, but they give collective Humanity no eternal principle for its sacrifice, none to make sacrifice divine and not foolish and wasted. They may lay much stress on sacrifice to God, but they cannot carry home sacrifice by God. They set up in Christ less an act of salvation through self-sacrifice by God than a process of self-realisation through the sacrificial principle of Humanity, which, however, cannot be guaranteed as pleasing to God because it cannot be carried into the divine nature itself. The cross, that is, becomes but functional in Christ, it is not organic, nor constituent of His appearance among men; it is the effect of an epiphany, but not the principle of an Incarnation. And selfishness can never be extinguished by an ethic of sacrifice so long as sacrifice is not placed at the core of religion by its revelation at the heart of the object of religion. Nothing can continue to evoke self-sacrifice in Humanity which does not find in Christ the self-sacrifice of a holy God, and therefore the supreme moral reality. For nothing can be conceived ethically higher than that God should sacrifice Himself to His own holiness for love of man. The act of the cross is the very nature of God's self-revelation, which is His self-donation; it is not simply one form of revelation, far less one phase of a moral ideal. The object of worship in Christ's person is there among us by an act of self-sacrifice; He does not simply perform such an act upon occasion when He has come there. His connection with Humanity is not one of continuous self-realisation, as if He crowned the great human process, and used sacrifice as a means on due occasion; it is one of self-identification, by an initial and a compendious act of sacrifice possible only to a Person who has the absolute disposal of Himself.

Christ was God giving Himself far more than man finding himself. The Incarnation is a moral act of this kind far more than a spiritual process. Therefore it cannot be monistic in its nature; for monism may stand many scientific tests, but it breaks down on the moral. Morality may undergo a process, but a process *per se* has nothing moral in it. Nor can man's response to the Incarnation be a mere mystic or subliminal spirituality, but it must be a faith as historic and ethical in its heart and genius as the revelation which stirs it; it must be a faith in that which once for all re-creates the conscience; and that a social and evangelical creed alone can be.

I have recognised that the old way of putting the rationalist position differed from the new. It said that the principle and its prophet had no necessary connection, but only one external, passing, and at bottom accidental; that the aqueduct did not necessarily guarantee the water; that the person might be most sincere and true but the principle wrong and false; and the person might even conceivably live, as St. Paul did, to promote a later principle quite antagonistic to his first. That view marked the early days of the narrower rationalism, when both revelation and its critics were preoccupied with stateable truth more than cognisable reality, and when the work of the person as prophet was to convey truths and doctrines, supernatural or natural, as the critics' work was to dissolve them. Everything, orthodox or heterodox, was a matter of truths. All was in the propositional region.

But we have changed that. The new way of putting Lessing's position abolishes that comparative indifference of the principle to the person. It couples up the connection and makes it necessary. The person is not charged with truth so much as with reality, action, life, and power. The charge is cognate, the vocation identical, with the person. The person is not the medium but the incarnation of the principle; whose first adequate realisation was in a person with a central place in history. The redemptive principle

henceforth acted from Him, not as its expositor merely, but as its one vital historical source; and He became not simply its prophet but "both its pattern and its *Guarantee*." The phrase is from Biedermann, one of the most powerful and pious of those who postpone the person to the principle of Christ.

But now may we stop a little on that word "guarantee"? I have had to use it myself already. And the ablest champions of the Christian principle as superior to Christ's person (like Biedermann) are driven by the depth of their Christian experience to use it too. But why? Is it not because, with their true religious feeling, and their masterly knowledge of religious history, both Christian and other, they do realise that the very element which distinguishes a guarantee from a prophet, a pattern, or a classic case, is for religion the one thing needful? What is the meaning of the word guarantee? Why must we speak of Christ as our Surety, with the old divines and these new thinkers? What have we in the expression that we have not in speaking of Christ as the type, prophet or promoter of the principle? Have we not in the use of such a word the surrender of the whole case, and the identification of the principle with the person? Is it not a confession that, however it may be with philosophy, yet for religion, for the soul's life, the person of Christ *is* the principle of Christianity and of the spiritual world? Could anything less serve the purpose of religion, and plant the soul upon eternal reality? Could a person, as a phase assumed by the principle, guarantee either its Universality or Eternity? If the supreme principle is to be guaranteed by a supreme person it must be identical with it. For a person not identified and co-eternal with the principle, but merely its exemplary symbol in life, word and deed, could only utter in a most impressive way, even in his martyr death, his own life-deep conviction of the principle. Further he could not go. The thing he could not do is to guarantee that what was such a conviction for Him is the eternal life, power, and master of the world and the race. He could not assure the

man of to-day that the principle for which He died is always as mighty for the last reality of things, for God and Eternity, as it was for His own soul. That could only be if His soul and person were absolutely identified with that last reality and principle; if Jesus of Nazareth were living eternal Godhead. To speak of Christ as the Guarantee of an eternal principle, as Biedermann's religion makes him do, is to identify Him with it, as his theology does not.

An ultimate can only be guaranteed by itself. That is the basis of the certainty, supremacy, and autonomy of religion in the soul. God swears by Himself because there is none greater. Our final authority must be God Himself in direct contact with Humanity, *i. e.* with History. He cannot be proved, because there is nothing more real and certain to which we can bring Him for sanction. And if the principle be that of sonship to a Father-God—that is surely a personal relation, if it have any meaning at all; and it can guarantee itself only as a person: not by assuming the passing form of a person for an historic purpose, but by existing as an historic but universal person in whom the relation is realised germinally,<sup>1</sup> perfectly, and for ever, by existing as the King of all personal sons and the ground of all sonship. If the word guarantee must be used (as those who are thinkers, and not historians simply, feel it must be for the effective base of a real religion), it can be used only to mean that in the historic person we have not the effect, nor the avatar, nor the intuition of the principle, but the principle itself. It can be used only in the sense that the person *is* the principle. And we are then left to choose whether the power identical with that person is the principle of Humanity, moving in fine spiritual processes, or a personal God bestowing Himself in a moral act. The person of Christ is an incarnation either upwards of the principle of Humanity, which is a Christianised positivism, or downwards of personal Godhead, which is positive Christianity. And between the visualisation of a principle deeply immanent and the incarnation of a

<sup>1</sup> God appears in Christ *in nuce*, not *in extenso*.—ROTHE.

holy God, religion will not find it hard to choose, if it rise to the ethical level of Christian faith. The key to the person of Christ is to be found not in an intellectual conviction, philosophic or theologic, nor in a romantic piety, part mystical part wise, but in a positive religious experience of Him and a crucial moral decision behind which we cannot go in the quest for life's reality. It is not a theory of Atonement that is the deep need of the hour, but the experience of it, the atoned soul. We need most, not a theology of religion, but a theology which is religion; not a theology of religion but of God; not a speculative theology, which has always broken down, but a soteriological and experimental, which actually solves the moral crisis of the world. All that speculation can do for a Christology is but in the way of prolegomena. It may survey the ground, and even build the house and staff it, but the tenant does not arrive. It may trace a general process, cosmic or rational, and mark it emerging in the history of man's progressive elevation and sanctity. It may note in the course of that history the powerful part played by various providential personalities, and even religions, that yet but stand and wait. Such geniuses may be as far above common men as these are above molluscs. But whether the principle of their service ever appears as a single person with the sole right to sign God's autograph to all their witness—that no speculative treatment of the world can guarantee; at least not powerfully enough for practical life and eternal committal in such a world as this is. It is a matter for a theology which is not speculative but dogmatic, on the basis of an historic experience by the conscience that He has come as God's gift of Himself. Speculation has its great uses (so long as it is schooled and competent, and not amateur speculation).<sup>1</sup> But at its best it has no gospel, it is not

<sup>1</sup> Till, for instance, a passage like this (from Treherne, before German philosophy was heard of) seems something else than absurd. "For His very perfection God needs what is not God. An energy working outwards He must possess. He must think his non-ego. And considering what thought is for God, He must posit the non-ego. But the non-ego is a

propagandist, it is indifferent to success, and it is not for the pulpit, or the people, or history. Idealism founds no Society. Not that it is for that reason futile, or even inferior. It is simply different. It has a different work. It can neither be a religion nor infringe upon the independence of religion. But when we have found our soul in an historic salvation then speculation may richly enter, and metaphysic may amply deduce from a Saviour's action for God a content of God in His nature and work. If for our faith Christ have the value of God we cannot help assigning to Him in our thought the nature of God. But the thought that affects faith is one thing, and that which takes the place of faith is another. The phenomenon of Christ is ultimate, and the faith that grasps it is the same. He is a final fact that cannot be constructed, and He can be construed but a little way, while He is received and trusted for eternity.

The effect, then, of the theory of historical development on religion is twofold.

1. Either it denies that any final revelation of the absolute and eternal is possible in history. All is in evolution, all is relative, all is temporary, and the generations must live from hand to mouth.

To which the answer is an old one, and a double—the identity of ground and goal. What is it that develops? And to what end does it move, so that we may know whether the movement is development, and the evolution is progress? What develops? How is it possible to think of development unless there be something that develops? And if a something be admitted, but a revelation of its nature and object be denied, then how

negation, a limitation of God. And it would destroy His absoluteness, if that were not necessarily restored by His absorption of the non-ego as such, and His recovery of Himself in the Creation. Distinguish the two timeless functions—the positing of the non-ego, or its counterpositing, in Creation, and the absorption or surmounting of the antithesis, or its Repositing, in a Reconciliation."

That may be true, or it may not be true; but it cannot be dismissed as unmeaning.

are we to tell if its movement be development, *i.e.* if its action be giving fuller effect to its nature? We cannot, unless we have some means, religious or philosophic, of convincing ourselves that the God of history is also its ground, and the person the principle. It is impossible to speak of all being in evolution, all relative, unless there be an absolute to evolve and to make relation possible and measurable. Two things, two stages, could be in no kind of relation except by virtue of a unity which made them comparable. There could be no relative without an absolute, nothing temporal without the Eternal. So far from evolution excluding an absolute, therefore, it demands it for its existence; and Time is only intelligible on a foundation of Eternity.

2. Or, admitting an absolute reality brought within our cognisance by revelation in an evolutionary history, one may go on, as we have seen, to deny the possibility of its complete and final revelation at any one point of time. And this is the view which practically carries most danger to Christianity. Practically it is most dangerous, because to the generous amateur it seems religious and broad. It appears Christian by acknowledging a revelation, only it spreads it over Humanity. And it seems to promise an intimate spirituality by an experience of God in the depth of each soul which is a revelation to us in the same sense in which it was to Jesus. Which leaves most men to a subjectivity without a compass or a pole.

If the possibility of the absolute and final in a person be conceded it may still be said, as by Strauss, that such a person could not appear at the beginning of a series but only at its close. And to that the answer would be on lines like these. The statement is one drawn from physical evolution rather than psychical or historic. For all history shows some of the greatest triumphs of poetic genius, and especially religious genius, in very early stages of society. Moreover, we have to make our most crucial decisions early in life. And it is, still further, a statement too obviously bound up with the Hegelianism Strauss represented, *viz.*

that creation took its origin, not from a personal absolute at the beginning of the series, but from an idea of some monistic kind which only acquired the self-consciousness of personality at the end of the series as Man. Finally, if a revelation of the absolute is essential for faith, and it cannot come till the close, then for history it cannot be a factor at all. It would be history's last product, and one dissociated from faith (which there was nothing to create). And to dissociate history from faith is to non-moralise it; it is to reduce all to an ideal process, concerning which we could have no certainty that any ethical revelation was to be more sure at the goal than it had been active in the course.

But it may be worth while before leaving the subject to ask here what it is that is really objected to by many who refuse a unique finality to Christ's experience and person. It is often the notion that the whole metaphysical being of God with all His divine attributes was identical with the human personality, Jesus. Now that is a statement that may mark certain crude Christologies at certain levels in the history of Christianity, but it is not the thing that is asserted by Christian faith; and it has no more sense than the new dogma at the other extreme which says that Christ was identical with Humanity.

What faith has to do with is the personal unity in an equal Godhead of Son and Father, a unity which is moral, because holy, in its nature, though it is much more than moral harmony; a unity also on the great moral principle that subordination does not imply inferiority. There must be a metaphysic of it, indeed, but that is deductive from the experience of faith, and not primary in producing faith, and not fixed in its form. Dogma, and especially metaphysical dogma, does not produce faith. It is only a temporary register of it. The function of dogma is to express the mind of the believing Church, not to prescribe to the inquiring world. The person of Jesus, however it may be metaphysically explained, has its first value

as an actual and complete manifestation of the absolute personality as holy love. The necessities and implicates of such a revelation made to experience form the only sure foundation of a doctrine of the Trinity. For Christ could not be such a manifestation to the soul without sharing in that absoluteness in the way of entire and eternal continuity of life. He shares in that absolute life as a constituent person; He does not receive it into His person as a great unit of Humanity might, whose relative personality formed but a fit *receptacle* for the absolute Spirit. Nor is it as if other men were robbed of the divinity concentrated in Christ. For the greater a moral personality is the more room it has for others, whom it does not impoverish, but enrich and realise. And Christ makes real for those who enter communion with Him what without Him were a mere possibility, a mere bias to God. He *is* that which in them is only a destiny. He *is* the gracious destiny of all. He *is* the will and purpose of God for which they were but planned, but for which they are only in Him empowered. God truly was in Humanity before Christ was born, but as a presence and a power in contact, and not in communion; by His Spirit, but not, as He is in His Church, by His Holy Spirit. And He was in a created Humanity, moving always to an increate but historic Christ as at once its ground and its destiny; in a Humanity created from the beginning with a view to that Christ as its free consummation; created as it were round Christ, yea by Christ, and not merely so as to eventuate in a Christ at some far end, which was to be remotely divined rather than trusted as near, and which closed a series it did not produce. The end was in the beginning; the goal of the Church is also its ground. That is what is meant by a Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

We cannot grasp too clearly the real issue of the present time. Since the death of Agnosticism it no more concerns the possibility or the reality of a revelation, but it concerns the finality of the revelation in Jesus Christ. The conflict

is no more between religion and science, but between two forms of religion. The revelation is admitted both in Humanity and in Christ, and therefore religion is admitted, and a certain kind of faith has its due place. The Cosmos grows sacramental even for science. What is not admitted is the absoluteness, the finality, the cruciality for the soul's eternity, of the historic Christ as the saving revelation. By which again is not meant the existence in Him of all possible knowledge; for religion is not a matter of knowledge, but rather of the heart's conscience. Nor is it meant that we have no indication outside Him of God's thought; but indication is not revelation, which means certainty, and concerns not God's movements but His final purpose. It is meant that in Him we have that new moral departure which all the sequel can only unfold and enrich; we have a new Creation, the new Humanity round which the old dies like a corn of wheat; we have the turning-point of human destiny for all Eternity: we have the presence and act of God decisive for that purpose, a final salvation but not a final science of saving truth, a final faith but not a final theology.

## ESSAY VI

### CONTINUITY THROUGHOUT THE REFORMATION

REV. PROF. WHITNEY