Faith

and

Criticism

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Revelation and the Person of Christ.[1]

I.

AMIDST the Churches, sects, and parties of Christendom, there is one cross division which does not correspond with any of the familiar lines. It is the mark of a spirit rather than of a doctrine, of a tendency more than a polity; and it may be described as the division between those whose chief aim is spiritual *safety*, and those to whom it is spiritual *certainty*. Roughly speaking, it follows most closely the distinction between the Roman genius and the Protestant; but it separates even Protestants among themselves in a way which forbids us to regard it as the dividing line of the two communions. It expresses, however, the difference between the Roman and the Protestant spirit in whatever Church it is found. And if ever that great breach is to be healed it must be by such recasting of doctrine as shall

[1] The writer of this essay desires to express his obligations, both in thought and occasionally in phrase, to the writings of Professor Herrmann, of Marburg. These obligations, however, are religious and theological, and he would not be understood to share the philosophical position which is the negative side of that school. The stress laid upon the experiential rather than the philosophical side is due to the fact that the essay is more a tract for the times than a

harmonize these two principles, and discover a certainty which itself *is* the soul's saving health, and not merely leads to it, promises it, or fulfils its preliminaries.

The doctrine which is most directly affected by this distinction is the doctrine of Revelation. The varieties in our conception of what is meant by Revelation resolve themselves into two classes. There are some who view it as providing a set of conditions, to comply with which secures by a divine but arbitrary connexion the future *safety* of the soul; and there are others who regard it as conveying something which is in itself the soul's *certainty*, its natural food, its health and salvation present and eternal—briefly, as a Soul coming to be the soul's life. The whole change and deepening now going on in our idea of Revelation may be said to be due to the progress of the latter view. It is the protestantizing of Protestantism itself under the influence of its own principle of salvation. This lies not *through* certainty, but *in* certainty, in certainty of a kind which itself *is* salvation. The way is the truth and the life. Revelation, that is to say, is not *through* Christ, but *in* Christ. Nay, the old inveterate error can only be erased by boldly saying, Revelation is Christ. Revelation is not a thing of truths at all. It is not scientific. It is a matter of will, not of thought. For it would then be but an adjunct of salvation, and its answer would not be religion, but assent, not choice, but knowledge. Truths dwell but in the forecourt of the soul. Freedom of thought is a far less precious thing than the freedom of the soul, and

at this moment far less imperative. It is for this latter that Revelation exists. It is not for illumination, but for redemption; and as only a soul can free a soul, as only a soul can mediate between soul and soul, Revelation is therefore not a thing of truths, but of persons and personal acts. It is not truth about God, but God Himself as truth; and it is not met by any belief about the soul, but by the soul believing.

When the purpose of Revelation is viewed as the soul's certainty rather than its mere safety—its inward self-security rather than its happy situation—it follows that the Revelation must be in a fact. That fact, we have just seen, must really be a person. It must be a fact of history. A real Revelation must be historic, and its power personal.

To make Nature the site of Revelation, to seek it in the Kosmos rather than in the Ethos, is the very genius of Paganism, and it is the source of the humanist and scientific Paganism of our own day. And this is true, however refined our Kosmos may be; though it be the most rarefied system of principles or diamond network of ideas. It is a procedure which leaves the character of God too much at the mercy of any particular stage in the history of discovery, or any passing phase in the history of poetry. It ends in nature-worship and idealized atheism. All truth is from God, but it does not all lead us back to God. It does not reveal Him, though it act divinely on us. Much truth passes to us through valves, as it were, which prevent the current of thought from returning by the same channel to its source, and compel us

to reach it by another circulation. If we will use words carefully, there is no Revelation in Nature. There can be none, because there is no forgiveness. We cannot be sure about her. She is only æsthetic. Her ideal is harmony, not reconciliation. She may hold to her fitful breast her tired child, soothe her fretful sons, kindle her brilliant lovers to cosmic or other emotion, and lend her imagery to magnify the passions of the heart; but for the conscience, stricken or strong, she has no word. Therefore she has no Revelation. For Revelation is not of thought, structure, or force, but of will and purpose. Nature does not contain its own teleology; and *for the moral soul* that refuses to be fancy-fed, Christ is the one luminous smile upon the dark face of the world.

Nor can we find Revelation (in the sense of religious certainty) in the movements of our own pure, pious, and genial hearts, in a natural piety, or even a Christian humanism. These are but heavenly witnesses. It is not the men who have known the heart least that have been most distrustful of its verdict on things divine. It is too unstable. What is at best but a reflection, and not a revelation, of God is oftenest a broken reflection. The polestar itself dances in that stormy sea. But, still more, the heart's voice is the voice of a sinful heart. Sin is no accident, like blindness, which leaves the faculties and the conscience clear; and it is in the hour of our most thorough and guilty confusion that we chiefly turn to seek the certainty which a Revelation exists to give. What is so often called a religion of the heart is but a mystic and sentimental

piety, with a fuss about reason and a stress upon ethics, but without the ample thought, the profound passion, and the moral verve of faith. It emphasizes what starts from us rather than what starts from God. It makes light of history, and constantly tends to view Christ as indeed the chief contributor to Christianity, but as a point that we have passed. It treats Him as the discoverer and prophet of the filial principle, but still as its mere agent and subordinate. If the Revelation of God have its immediate source in a movement of our own natural soul, then not only is Pantheism inevitable, as the most refined Nature-worship, but it is inevitable that Christ should come to be viewed as only a medium or preparation for this experience; and it will be felt that He may be safely forgotten in the hour of our rapt absorption with God, as every mere instrument, vehicle, and step of the process must be in the consummation of such an end. But that isolation of the soul with God which is so impressive to minds of the austere, mystic, and individualist type, is not Christian communion. In their solitude with God these devout souls are less lonely than they think. The mediation of Christ is equally necessary to every age and every stage of our Christian intercourse with God, who is to be found not *through* Christ, but only *in* Him. And the true idea of Revelation is that which regards Christ, not merely as the historic cause of redemption, nor even as its theological *prius*, but as its abiding spiritual ground and active principle for every man. If He be left behind in the progress of

His own religion, both He and it are less than universal. For the universality of Christianity stands on the universality of Christ; and He would be less than universal had He been more to the first stage of the Church than He is to the last—had He been then more real and near. It is just His uniqueness that He is equally necessary to the religious reality of every age, and is a portion of it in no posthumous, but in a very present sense; that He, in His living person, is an element of our moral world and not merely its legacy, its heir and not its inheritance, the test and judge of every age, "the rock on which it stands or the stone on which it falls;" that He belongs to our personal reality as Christians, and is the ground of our religious self-certainty; in whom we not only see ourselves, but find and acquire ourselves, of whom we are surer, in the classic examples of faith, than we are of ourselves or our subjective experience.

Nor can a source for Revelation be found in philosophic idealism, or the principle of divine sonship severed from the person of Christ, any more than in the æsthetic Christ. The active contents of Revelation, it must be reiterated, are not truths, ideas, or even principles. That is the fatal error shared also by the vicious notion of an orthodoxy or saving system. The sole content of Revelation, the power and gift in it, is the love, will, presence and purpose of God for our redemption. There, and there alone, must the divinity of Christ be sought. He was equipped with those powers, and only those which were essential for that work. If He was

God, it was because only in that way could the very power and life of God touch us, seize us, change us, and pass us from death to life. It was not chiefly because of a metaphysical necessity. It is incapable of any adequate metaphysical explanation. The constitution of the Godhead before the birth of Christ is no direct portion of His Revelation, however necessary as its corollary. It is possible to believe in His pre-existence as a logical necessity of redemption, while we yet deny that it forms any portion of Revelation so direct as were His historic faith and obedience unto death. The demand for Revelation which is created by the actual situation of the soul and the actual needs of the conscience is not a demand for knowledge, but for power and life; and what Revelation gives is not scientific certitude. It is not an extension of our knowledge. The more we know, the more we need Revelation. So many discussions of Revelation seem to proceed on the supposition that it is to meet our ignorance instead of our helplessness, the craving of one faculty instead of the hunger of them all, the demands of our freedom instead of the passion of our bondage, a sinless intelligence rather than a guilty conscience. They set about assuring us of a "disinterested" knowledge of God, and offering Theism as an experimental basis for religion, whereas no disinterested knowledge of God is possible. Practical Christianity does not begin with Theism. An object of disinterested knowledge can never be God for us whatever power or reality it may have; and certainly such knowledge is not Revelation, and therefore can-

not have much value for personal religion. Revelation has less to do with divine causes, than with divine motives and purposes. It is not aetiological, for it would then be science, and not religion. It is teleological because it is moral. It regards our end and destiny, not our origin. It has nothing to say about Creation; it has everything to say about Redemption. It is silent about the origin of sin; it recognizes the fact and brings the remedy. It is obscure even about the origin of the Redeemer. Its agents are not principles, but personal powers; and what it carries home to us is not so much the thoughts of God, nor even the affections of God taken alone, but what God has *done* on our behalf. We come back to the nature of Revelation as a historic personal fact, which is the object of our soul-certainty and not simply the condition of our safety; in which it is health and not prudence to believe.

And we are sustained in this view of Revelation when we realize that it is not complete till it become intercourse. It is not an act declaratory, nor an act of mere manifestation. It is much more than a theophany. God does not simply show Himself, He *gives* Himself; and a gift is not a gift (however genuine the giving) till it is received and realized as such. Revelation is of such a nature that it can only be completed in a life of converse with the Revealer, of intercourse which takes effect not in ecstasies, but in the actual duties and occasions of our calling in life. It is not a simple act, but an act of mutuality. Its sphere is the world of experience, yet of moral and concrete experience—not ecstatic. Its response

is our faith, yet a faith sober, strong, and practically sure, not quietist, pietist, and elate. And while we refuse the Catholic view of the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation, we must yet regard the Kingdom of God as the necessary complement and response without which Revelation would not be Revelation, but only emanation or exhibition. It is a factor without which the Incarnation is not complete, the second pole without which Revelation would have nothing mutual in its nature, but would only move self-contained on its centre like a revolving light. So impossible is it to separate Revelation from Redemption, or the knowledge of what Christ is from the experience of what He did and does. It is not the philosophy of the two natures, but "the benefits of His work" that give the key to understand His Revelation.

The false ideas of Revelation are due to a false emphasis laid either on the past or on the present. What they fail to realize is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Undue stress upon the past leads to the apotheosis of a book or of a system. It may be called in a word *Confessionalism* (including Scripturalism). It means faith in some utterance of faith, at the cost of the active object of faith. The Bible is certainly on a different footing from the creeds in some ways and especially in normality; but in this respect they are alike. They are alike the product of the Church's faith in its Lord. It was not one act of Revelation that gave us the Son in Christ, and a second that gave us the Spirit in the Bible to supply what was wanting to the first. There is but

one Revelation, and it is Christ. The Lord is the Spirit. There is but one Christ, and the Bible is His prophet. The Bible is the musical echo of the Revelation—its reverberation at its first discharge into history in the deep caves and sonorous pillars of the soul.

Christ created the Church, and the Church answered first with the Bible, when faith was pure and positive, and then with the creeds, when it had lost in a refined secularity the glow of its first love. But Christianity is not a book religion. It has a book, but the book is not the Revelation. It does not even contain the Revelation any more than the reflecting telescope contains the heavens. It is the echo of the Revelation repeated, and, in a sense, even enhanced among the hills and valleys of the redeemed inspired soul. All question of a book as a revelation ought to cease when we recall that the Revelation Himself never wrote a word, never ordered a word to be written, and apparently never contemplated any Bible more extended than the Scripture He Himself had used. He thought of the New Testament as little as He thought of the creeds. And so far as His authority goes, there is just as much reason to believe in the infallibility of the one as of the other. If that infallibility be carried beyond Himself, if it be not confined to Himself, and to Himself in His direct equipment for Redemption, there is no logical halting-place till we arrive at the Vatican Decrees. And yet people wonder why Rome flourishes. Rome conquers as the savages may occasionally beat our troops—with weapons our

factories supply. Rome flourishes by working out to their conclusion principles on which a purblind Protestantism hazards its own life.

The other false idea of Revelation is mysticism or idealism, the apotheosis of a heart intuition or of a philosophic idea. They are at bottom one, and they both issue in mere contemplation. Here the undue stress is laid upon the present and not the past. Far be it from us to say that there is nothing mystic about the faith of Christ, or about His Revelation. But it is a mysticism fatal to Revelation when the affections of the individual, or the ideas of a school, supersede the historic Christ as the voice of the living God, and when the echo of Christ's influence is turned into the criterion of His Revelation. He is the test of our hearts; they are not the test of Him. He is no more to be judged by our conscience than His Gospel is to be measured by the Church's success with it among men. To make the heart the judge of Revelation is to raise sentiment and individualism to the control of Revelation, and so to make them the real Revelation. It is fatal not only to the place of Christ but to the humility of the Christian, as we have evidence in much current Christianity which is generous, rational, beautiful, and sympathetic; but is sometimes irreverent, often self-conscious, and mostly too weak in objective authority to cope with the importunity of the sensible world. A Revelation whose very being is in forgiveness, and whose action is Redemption, is denied in the act of submitting it to be judged by the soul it redeems or the conscience it creates. If a test of anything

purporting to be Revelation is to be found, it must lie in its necessary and organic connexion with the inner consciousness of the historic Christ. It is not our conscience that judges, not even "the Christ in every man," but the conscience of the historic Christ in His confessed disciples. It is yesterday's Christ that is the Christ of to-day. It is the Christ of that old yesterday that is the living Christ. It is not "the living Christ" that is the Christ of yesterday. Think what you will of the record of His birth, but do wake up to the irony of the situation when you bring Him to the bar of the conscience which owes itself to Him; and realize the fatuity of testing Him by a culture His Gospel has made possible, but whose sympathies are not with Him and whose terms He probably would not have understood. If such procedure be possible then it is we that have the Revelation, not He; and were He to revisit earth He would have to learn of His God from us, whom once He taught a message that we have outgrown. The Christian consciousness is an obedience, not a criticism. Faith is a response, it is not a source. It is not a judgment, it is an answer to the historic soul of Christ, and evoked by that alone.

II.

In the true sense of the word Revelation it must be final. If we possess a criterion of Revelation it is the criterion that becomes the Revelation. Revelation

can only be judged by Revelation. Christ's witness to Himself overbears all criticism, except that of the record. Rationalism, whether orthodox or heterodox, consists in measuring Revelation by something outside itself. But it must be borne in mind that Revelation is a religious idea, that its counterpart and response is not knowledge, nor even poetry, but faith. It is for faith, it is not for science, that Revelation is final. It is *the soul's* certainty and power that it assures. It is a religious finality that Christ claims. What He gives is peace with God. His Revelation is final, not in compass, but in kind. All is revealed but not everything. It is a qualitative and not a quantitative finality. He declares the whole counsel of God, but not every counsel. He does not give us a programme of history or a compendium of doctrine, as the Catholic and old-Protestant theory of a book-revelation is. He gives us a power of God, a certainty of faith, a quality of life, a finality of destiny, in contact with Him. Many things were unsaid, yet He said all—all that faith needs, but not all that knowledge craves; all that makes men, but not all that makes civilization—and yet all that makes civilization possible. He declares the depths of God's will, but not the details of His counsel. The Revelation of Christ is final, and was by Him meant to be final, for all that concerns God's decisive will, purpose, and act for our salvation. Christ is Himself the final expression of that. He is not final in the sense of exhausting knowledge. To be exhaustive is just not to be final. It closes one region only to set our interest free for another. He is final

because He is inexhaustible, and His silence has the same mastery, depth and suggestiveness as His speech. He is final in the sense of placing us sinful men in living, loving and trustful union with the final reality of life and the world. Our ragged rocks and roaring shoals are flooded into peace by His incoming tide. No higher revelation in kind is possible or thinkable. Later ages might extend the spiritual horizon, but nothing was left for later ages to do in the way of reconciling man and his destiny, man and God. Christ is final in respect of His undying personality and work. Whatever is to be done for human redemption He and no successor does it. Whatever comes to us in the way of revelation is the appropriation of Him. He is the ultimate impulse in the spiritual, and so in the whole progress of man. He cannot be forgotten while His work grows mighty and prevails. He cannot be parted from His work like any mere discoverer. His work is just to make Himself indispensable, to renew Himself in every age and every experience, to become in every life the one power which, amid the withering of all things, neither custom nor age can stale, but which from its throne evermore makes all things new. And he is final, furthermore, in virtue not simply of His harmony, but of His solidarity with the Father. He is thus the organ to us of a certainty which is the final certainty of life, and which would be impossible were He merely harmonious, as we all may hope to be one day, with the Father's will. The finality of His Revelation and the absoluteness of our certainty are bound up with the uniqueness in kind of His person;

which is to other persons what His Revelation, considered as truth, is to all truth else—not so much compendiary as central, pervasive and dynamic.

Christian faith has never found the ground of its certainty in itself, but always in Christ. It does not even believe in Christ because of the Bible, for that would be believing because of the effect of Christ, or the Spirit's work, upon others. Rather does faith believe in the Bible because it believes in Christ, and it descends upon historic facts with a trust in the personal fact, Christ, which is more certain to our experience than any mere historical evidence can be. Whatever account an individual here or there may give of his religious moments, in the great classical instances of Christian experience, and in the large witness of the Church itself, it is Christ, the historic Jesus, that is experienced. It is an experience that cannot be explained away as a vision might. It becomes the new life itself. Paul and Luther did not simply see the Lord. That might have been a projection of their exalted selves. But it was a creative, not a created experience. It created a new life, it was not created by the old. Their experience for ever after was a self-consciousness of Christ, as Christ's was of God. He became not an episode to them but their world.

> "This vision, far from perish, rather grows,
> Becomes their universe which sees and knows."

Moreover it was an experience without which they would have had no saving knowledge of God.

But no human being ever did for Christ what He

does for us all. There is nothing in His experience of any man analogous to our experience of Him. Revelation did not come to Him as He comes to us. He depended on none as we do on Him. There was a directness and a solidarity in the relations between Him and the Father which do not exist between the Father and us without Him. The self-consciousness of Christ in respect of God was not parallel to the God-consciousness in man. The source of religious knowledge was not the same for Him as for us. To judge from history He found His certainty in His consciousness; we find it in Him. For Him self-consciousness was the source of such knowledge; for us it is only its site. Revelation was not made to Christ, but to us in Christ. The matter of Revelation was not a principle which He and we alike apprehend by the same method only with different degrees of completeness. It is not a truth which would thrive in our perception, even if the memory of Him grew dim. To take Him away from present religious reality is to cut off our spiritual supplies, and close in ice our waterway to God. No man is indispensable to truth; but Christ is. He is the divine truth of man. What He revealed was not a conviction, but Himself. His experience of God was His experience of Himself. He was God's self-expression in humanity. He was that even more than the expression of humanity in its ideal. He creates a new humanity more than He embodies the old. His first purpose was not Shakesperian—to reveal man to man. The relief that He gives the race is not the artist's relief of self-expression, but the

Saviour's relief of Redemption. He did not release the pent-up soul, but rebuilt its ruins. It was another power than man remaking man; it was not tongue-tied man made happy at last in a rapt hour of complete self-realization.

He is absolutely essential to our personal realization of the principle of His Revelation; and that not as its historic medium, but as its ever living mediator. He is not the founder of Christianity, but the living object of its faith and worship. He taught, he constrained, men to pray in such a way that their prayers turned in spite of themselves to Him. "I besought the Lord thrice." Was Paul there a saint-worshipper, an idolater? If Jesus never expressly invited worship, His Spirit led His nearest disciples to it by an irresistible necessity of faith. He hardly claimed Messiahship in so many words: but He so spoke of the kingdom, and so embodied it, that the conviction of His Messiahship became to His closest companions irresistible before He died. And so after He rose He came home to them as an object of prayer—by His own injunction indeed, but by His injunction in the shape of a necessity of faith. He is not an instance but a portion of our highest religious consciousness. He is not our ideal; for an ideal is imitable, and we cannot imitate our Redeemer. He is not our ideal, for we transcend and leave our ideal, when we have absorbed him into ourselves. The liker we grow to him, the more we can dispense with him. He does for us what it was in him to do, what at a stage we needed done; and we pass on, to remember him with gratitude but not with worship, to

find our freedom in escaping from him, and not in owning his sway. But the liker we grow to Christ the more indispensable He is to us. The closer we come to Him in character, the more He rules us. Those nearest Him have called themselves His slaves, and been their own freemen and the world's in the act. The more abundant our revelations the more of the Revelation we find Him to be; and the more we are redeemed the more we know His sole power to redeem. The higher He lifts us the loftier we find Him; and the more power He gives us the more we spend it in submitting to Him. Ideal is no name for what we find Him to be, and to be capable of being, to us. It seems as if our likeness to Him were only given us to enable us to realize our difference. It is in His difference from us, rather than in His resemblance, that the core and nerve of His Revelation lies. Our resemblance only provides the condition for appropriating it, and making it intelligible. The flesh is there for the sake of the Word. Why should we strive to reduce this difference? It brings Him nearer than any resemblance can. It is just His difference from all men that He identifies Himself with every man. The dearest and the likest us cannot come to us as He can. He is our Saviour, not because He is our brother, but because he is our Lord and our God. We are not His peers. We are not even His analogue, when it is a question of our knowledge of God. His experience is not simply a glorified version of ours. Throughout the New Testament Father has a different meaning in relation to Christ, and in relation to us, with an

equal reality for both. The New Testament Father is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Father in Christ. "When *ye* pray say Our Father." Did Christ ever say *Our* Father along with His disciples, or in their name? Rather He spoke of 'my Father and your Father.' Part of the offence He gave was by claiming God as "*His own* Father, and so making Himself equal with God." There is a gulf between the Fatherhood of the New Testament and the sentimental fatherhood of literary theology and its popular Christianity. It really concedes the whole Unitarian position to say, that God is the Father of every man in the same sense in which He is the Father of Christ except that He was His Father pre-eminently. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him." He *knew* the Father whom He *revealed* to men. It was not by Revelation that He received what in Him is Revelation to us. These words are not among the disputable portions of the Gospels; and they are decisive as to Christ's unique solidarity with the Father, and the dependence of all men on Him, as He depended on none, for the knowledge of God. As Paul puts it, Christ is the Son of God with power, while we are sons by adoption, in all that pertains to the moral relationship as distinct from the natural in creation. Exception may be taken to the metaphor of adoption, but to except to the fact and the difference it seeks to cover is to except to the consistent teaching of the New Testament. There God is revealed as Father, not in our feeling of childship, but in our certainty

of sonship in Jesus Christ. He is essential to constitute the sonship, and not merely to aid us to discover it. The intrinsic quality of our religious act is our sense not of a divine principle, but of Christ revealing Himself in us. And Revelation takes effect in us, not as an act of insight, but only as an experience of being redeemed. There are pure souls, reared in the lap of Christian culture, cloistered with thought, and unfamiliar with the deepest, darkest, and most passionate experiences either of sin, the soul, or the cross, to whom this may seem both unphilosophical and untrue. But in a long-established and hereditary Christian culture there is a new danger of a lofty and noble sort, lest the world by goodness know not God.

III.

Revelation then may be defined as the free, final and effective act of God's self-communication in Jesus Christ for man's redemption. It is not simply an act of manifestation, or even of impressive representation, but it is a historic and eternal act of deliverance, prolonged in an infinite number of acts *ejusdem generis* in the experience by Christian people of their redemption in Christ. It is a free act as being wholly marvellous and unbought. It is a final act because it embodies, in an aforesaid sense, the whole purpose of God with man. And it is effective because it is only completed by its return on itself in man's experience and response. A sound returns

void, but not a word, not a revelation. A Christ is not a Christ without a kingdom. It is, moreover, the self-communication of God, because it is not a witness to God by His closest intimate even in Eternity, but God Himself at work as our Redeemer. God so loved that He gave Himself in His Son; not, God was so lovely that the Son could not help giving report of it to men. That would make Christ a religious artist more than the Saviour. Nor is it thus, God was so eager to redeem that the Son's heart filled with the design to give the helpless divine passion voice and course among men. That makes the Son the prophet of God, not to say that He came to God's rescue. But God in the Son conveyed Himself, not a report, nor an expression, nor an echo, nor an engine of His will to redeem, but His own present redeeming will. It is impossible to separate Revelation from Redemption. Revelation has no real and final meaning except as the act of Redemption to the experience of being redeemed. Its response is by faith, not by scientific certitude, by faith as the certainty and experience of reconciliation. It is a religious and not a scientific act, and only by a religious act can it be met. Its express object in us is not to produce assent, nor to facilitate discovery, nor to vindicate a rational unity in things, but to establish soul-certainty. It has nothing directly to do with the identity of thought and being. It is free to discuss that and other questions because of a certainty which cannot wait for their solution before beginning to live and rule—the soul-certainty "if God be for us who can be against us?" This is a certainty which,

as a certainty, is only to be found in Christ. "Cogito ergo sum," says Descartes, and sets modern philosophy forth on its sublime orbit. But, "alas, poor cogitator," as Carlyle says, "what then?" But the certainty which is of faith speaks on this wise: "By the grace of God I am what I am." Religion cannot wait for the certainty of speculation. It did not wait for it in the actual course of history. The certainty of faith is surer than any experience which makes a basis for the criticism of faith, and the autonomy of faith is a more self-sufficient power than the independence of science, or even the final intuition of thought. It is the foundation of our practical life and eternal committal as Christian men. The certainty of faith is a portion of our own self-certainty, because the revelation of Christ becomes a portion of our own personal reality. We acquire a self-consciousness of Christ. As He has passed beyond all dispute into the reality of the world's history, so that by our very birth to some extent we put on Christ, in like manner He passes into the reality of the individual's history. And, as He has become in one sense the conscience of civilized Europe, so, in a deeper and more thorough sense, He becomes the conscience of the redeemed soul, and its organ of intercourse with God. It is impossible for the Christian to pray to God except through Christ, and it is equally impossible on occasion not to pray to Christ or, praying to Christ, not to feel that we are worshipping God. If a disciple had never addressed to Christ on earth the words, "My Lord and my God," there can be little doubt that the sense of them

has always risen from the bosom of the Church's experience of its Lord, and could as little be holden as He was of death. That only is a revelation of God for our Christian experience, which can be worshipped as God. The curtain is the picture. A revelation which cannot be worshipped is no revelation, but only the vehicle of it; it is but a communication about God. But Christ *is* the revelation. He did not receive it. God came *through* Christ, rather than *to* Christ; therefore we praise, we bless, we worship Him.

Indeed, God is in Christ in such a way that Christ's express statement of unity with the Father is of less moment for us than the total impression produced by His whole life and person. This experience teaches us that His presence is God's presence, His action on us God's action, His forgiveness of us God's forgiveness. To convey a living person to us in such a way is more than manifestation, and more even than inspiration. What indeed is inspiration but the glow upon the Revelation as it passes through our human atmosphere? Men were not inspired *for* the Revelation but *by* it. It is the result of Revelation, not its antecedent. The Revelation inspires, it is not the inspiration which reveals. The Christ who taught Paul to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," was more than an inspirer. And in conveying to sinful men, actually and effectively, the person and will of God, Christ was much more than inspired, more even than completely and constantly filled with God. We may not think of Christ as a human receptacle, whose consecration was in the contents alone. It is quite in-

adequate to say that the mould of His human personality was willingly and entirely filled by the Spirit of God. Nor may we cherish the common error which understands by the will of God, not the living God who wills, but some counsel or expression of His intent. Christ was more than an expression or work of God's will. He was God's will in action, not its work but its working. That is the key and the distinction of His personality. His person was absolutely one with His work. It was not, as Anselm said, a means to His saving work as an end ; it was not there to give divine value to His sufferings. Nor, conversely, was His work a means to His person as an end, which is the case with breadwinners like ourselves. There was, in His own view of it, such complete identification of His person with His work as can only be expressed in the idea of Revelation, when truly understood in its connection with Redemption. But, His work was the final will and purpose of God with man. God has no end in reserve beyond Christ. He has no end to which Christ's personality could conceivably be immolated, no purpose which would justify its destruction, without bringing down the whole fabric of our moral world. His person, therefore, was the expression, the energizing of the central final will of God for our salvation, of that will in regard to man which makes God God. His whole self was identified with the sole and final act of God for us. His *whole* self one with the *sole* act of God for us ! Does that not lift Him into a place which is of Godhead far more than of manhood, and of manhood only because so uniquely of God ? I think it must be

so if the statement is understood. But the chief difficulty, in an age so impoverished in moral imagination as the present, is to get statements on such great and deep moral subjects understood before they are denied, or appreciated even when understood.

IV.

Real revelation is always Christ revealed in us, and revealed as Redeemer. In a loose and secondary sense any bright imperious perception which occurs in our higher life is so called ; with the misfortune that the neophyte in his early raptures mistakes an importunate fancy for a divine call, and treats as revelation what is but a suggestion of his own raw mind under the stimulus of religious exaltation. Faith, the answer to revelation, is the sense of reconciliation with God in Christ. That is the real, direct, yea, sole object of revelation. Revelation does not tell us what to do or believe. It gives us in Christ the power, life, and certainty of reconcilement. It leaves that habitual sense to act on the character, and mould the moral judgment. It is thus that Christ reveals Himself in us and to us. He breaks forth on us from the record. His inner self comes out, seizes us, turns us from historians to Christians, from inquirers to devotees. The picture steps in awful fashion from its frame, and as we sink to the ground it lays its cheering hand on us, and we are at home in the spiritual world. The statue steps from its pedestal while we examine its lines. It steps down

glowing, and speaks a comfortable wisdom which begins with fear. No imperfections or accretions in the record prevent this result. Every line and limb is not there, there may even be some restoration in a later spirit, but the idea, the figure, the character, is distinct in our minds even as historians. And from within the historic figure there issues upon us, to make us Christians, the immortal reality itself as a living power, a present Lord, a really present God. And we know then our Redeemer has found us, as surely as we knew that we found Him beautiful and great. If this be not sure nothing is sure on the basis of which we question it. He becomes His own witness in us. What we then have is no mere insight of ours into a revelation set down in the past. It is that revelation individualizing itself into our case. It is the eternal living act of the historic Christ still acting in a particular instance, as the body's life is repeated in the life of its cells. It is the same Christ carrying out in individuals the eternal act he did once at a historic point for the race, and completing revelation in response. No phenomenon in history is revelation except in so far as it comes home to individual souls, is understood and welcomed as revelation, does in experience the work of revelation, and gives man the power amid all the pressure, illusion, and blight of life to be his own freeman in Jesus Christ.

To the individual Christ is this revelation ; from which our position seems to follow that He Himself cannot be a mere recipient of revelation, like the man He finds. A Christ who merely witnessed to God's revelation might be a valuable medium of

religious knowledge, and a powerful religious stimulus. He might be a great aid to faith and a great benefactor of the soul. But he would not exclude the possibility of mistake, nor quench the question whether he had quite correctly apprehended and transmitted the revelation he received. Then the absolute certainty of our faith would lack historic ground, and we should be driven to seek it in the disputed region of metaphysics. We might trust Christ but we could not trust in Him. We could not feel that we owed to Him our eternal selves, or could commit to Him our eternal souls. His experience would be analogous to ours, and historically the source of ours, but not, in the nature of spiritual reality, the ground of ours. He might be central to religious history, but not to religious reality. If he only realized the principle of religion, if he was only the first to grasp it in its fulness as sonship to God, if he left this principle as his great legacy to the race, if he but succeeded as none else ever did in adjusting his person to a principle, in living up to his high sweet creed, and leaving his life as an object lesson for all men to come—then indeed he might be the greatest of our soul teachers, but not the soul that makes a soul's certainty, not our revelation of God. That would then have to be sought, as he sought it, somewhere in each soul's own area, and in our dimness and vexation seldom found. His person would then have been wholly at the service of the light, but it would not itself be the luminous thing. He would be the founder, but not the object of our faith, the creator of the kingdom, as Heine said Moses *schuf*

Israel, but not its life, its permanent King and Head, not its revelation equally necessary for the reality of all time and both worlds, and equally indispensable for every man's forgiveness and reconciled intercourse with God.

V.

The form of religious certainty then was different in His case and ours, so far as we can trace Him in a record too scanty for an imitable ideal, but enough for the focus of spiritual force. For us that certainty is attached to a historic, and therefore an external, event, which transpired outside our experience, however it may be echoed and appropriated there; but for Him it had its source within His self-consciousness. We have to seek in Him what He found in Himself and found for the race. He is for us a source which had no analogue for Him. The more we realize Him the more we feel that we can only realize God in Him. And the more free and self-certain He makes us before God so much the more do we repudiate the idea of repeating His experience on our own account, of ever claiming for ourselves the same position to God that He did, or of finding in Him simply the great spiritual classic, the glorification of the God-consciousness or of the filial principle in Humanity. Doubtless He is the great spiritual classic, our ultimate religious fact, whose experience is worth far more for the nature of religion than all the rest of the race. But it is just the close interrogation

of this fact which compels us to regard Him as so much more than the great example of faith, if we use the verdict of His own self-consciousness, and take Him at His own worth. He began with a unity—a religious and not a metaphysical unity—with God, which none created in Him, but which He alone can create in us. We need not haggle about the philosophical definitions or hypostases of this unity. These are largely (even in Scripture) efforts of devout intellect, devised to explain the fact in His consciousness that He started from a unity with God which others only hope at the last to attain, and to attain only in Him. We need not go behind His own experience, which was not metaphysical, and which religiously indeed we cannot go beyond, without claiming a greater. We are face to face with the fact that so far as the Gospel record carries us into Christ's inner life, He did not *achieve* His unity with the Father by obedience and worship, but that His worship and obedience were the continuous expression of that unity. He 'learned obedience,' but He did not learn to obey. The form of the Father's will changed and deepened for Him with the tragedy of His life, but His unity with that will was as real and complete in its first demand as in its last. He came to know more of the counsel of God, but He never grew more close and obedient to His will. In all His moral and spiritual energy He was not pursuing or cultivating His unity with the Father. He was exerting it. With us there comes a growing sense of unity with God as we progress in moral obedience to His will, and especially to His incarnate will in Christ.

The sense of unity with God as a standing feature and habit of our character is a product, and mostly a very slow product of our practical faith. It is the fruit of much revelation. But with Christ Himself it was otherwise. It was not the result of revelation; for that would call for another Christ between God and Him. And it is more correct to say in this case that the practical faith and obedience was a product of His original sense of unity with God. This is a statement ventured not as the corollary of any dogmatic position assumed in advance about the person of Christ, but simply as the result of an effort to read the nature of His own consciousness from the Gospels. He does not appear to rise to a sense of His unity with the Father in proportion as He overcame the world, but He overcame the world in the progressive strength and exercise of that unity. His victory was the energizing of His relation to the Father; it was that relation in action. It was His life's work not to achieve it but to set it forth and make it actual in a real, a moral, and not a dramatic way. It was not a prize, a capture,[1] for Him, but a gift in Him for us. It was His work to reveal it in the shape of a life, not to shape His life so as to attain it. He revealed it under the concrete conditions of a life which was constantly called on for moral decisions of the gravest kind, and spiritual sagacity of the most profound. Such a life was the element, as it were, in which His intercourse with His Father took effect. It is a mistake to isolate His times of retirement and prayer, and regard them

[1] οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, Phil. ii. 6.

as seasons of intercourse with God different in any true sense from the other activities of His spirit. His labour was not to win His own soul, as with us, but to approve it, to express it, and so to win others. And the soul He had to express was a soul in constant intercourse, even if not in specific prayer, with the Father. "His task was not an ideal which looked in to cheer Him and to light up His weakness." And His intercourse with God was not a mystic process that went on behind the distracting energies of an active life. Soul and life for Him were one, and His actions were part of His total intercourse and unity with the Father. His person, as we have said, was one with His work. In all He did He was giving effect to the spiritual ground behind it. And this ground, this *prius*, was His constant vital solidarity with God. He did not live toward God, He lived God forth toward men. He did not so much face God with us, He faced us with God. And amid all our admiration of His moral power or beauty, amid all our sympathy with His humane and lofty heart, amid the softening of our pity at His sweet soul's bitter fate, we are arrested, we are solemnized, and in a measure rebuked from sympathy into religious awe. We are smitten into faith and worship by the discovery that He is the pitiful and the pitiable are we, that here is no seeker after God, but even in His wrong and agony God's Bringer, His very self and real Presence; and our Martyr is our Redeemer. We kneel down in something more than loyalty as we find in Him the constant sense that He was not visited by great ideals, or sustained by a great principle, but was in every movement of His life setting

forth God in an unembarrassed, however burdened, way, and doing what in the circumstances God would do. Who could cherish that consciousness as Christ did without a vision of the circumstances which was God's in kind if not in compass, without a sense of the will of God which was much more God's sense of His own will than any other's vision or apprehension of it!

VI.

It may be said that all this makes him irrelevant to life because His obedience thus becomes a different thing from ours, and an easier; for we start from no such unity with the Father. To this it must be answered that it is just the contention of these pages that His obedience was a different thing from ours. But then it was effective for salvation, and ours is not. It was the obedience which makes ours possible; it was inimitable, but reproducible. It cannot be emulated, it can but be repeated by Himself in the members whose life and whole it is. Our great act of obedience is to give up the hope of any similar and rival obedience, of any obedience so comparable or parallel to His that we could harbour the jealous complaint that He had an advantage. He who so complains is outside Christ. Our one obedience is to welcome His obedience as the gift of God, which we must accept, enter, and share as a new and saving obedience. The obedience of faith is faith as obedience. It is faith's nature, not its result. Certainly, He had

one advantage; He forestalled us in the claiming of none, in the self-emptying power which so few covet or grudge Him. His advantage over us, too, is our only hope of eternal advantage for ourselves. It is all ours, unless we reduce Him to our competitor.

If the saying of it would discourage our efforts in emulation of Him, perhaps it were well to say frankly that the more they are discouraged the better; if only they are discouraged by that which puts a higher obedience at our disposal, and breaks the self-respect which is the chief inward enemy of grace, and which, in the shape of moral pride in our uprightness and respectability, is the chief obstacle to our salvation.

As for His obedience being easier than ours, the reply is really the same. The antithesis is a false one. It begins by regarding Him as one of us, and so a rival, instead of God's gift of grace to us, to save us from rivalry as our common Redeemer and our King. But the objection is not real, as may be readily tested by asking which of the murmurers would be willing to exchange lots with Him, and accept, instead of their own vocation, that of the world's Redeemer. The answer is not doubtful when we consider how many are willing to drink their own misery to the dregs rather than take the yoke of Christ—even with the aid of His fellowship and strength to bear it. Unless, indeed, this last be what they most resent. For the last enemy to be destroyed is that all but invincible pride and recalcitrancy in man, which will readily yield to an impersonal *law*, but must be broken to pieces ere

it give way to another *person* as absolute king. This is why social and political progress is so much more rapid and welcome than religious; and it is a fact which removes all parallel between the work of the politician and the preacher, the socialist and the saint. To return, if it is a question of comparative ease in the obedience, the account may be more than balanced when we remember that there was none to be for Him what He is to us, and that He had to seek in Himself alone the resources which He has enabled us to find in Him.

VII.

With this ground under our feet we need not fear falling into the hands of the Socinians or their descendants if we feel unable to get our way about in the technical theology of the two natures in one person. If the Incarnation is to cease to be the property of the schools, and become what it is not now, an essential principle of each man's conscious faith, it must cease to be a mere palladium, and become what the Godhead of Christ is in the New Testament—a gospel. It must be stated as a truth of historical and experimental religion, where the wayfarer, however simple, shall not err, so long as Christ has in him his effectual work. And the line we have taken should not be beyond such a man if he know what Christian experience is in any real and final sense. With others it is hardly possible to deal. No one can cherish a Unitarian Christ who recognizes that Jesus not only saw God truly, or truly

reflected Him, but knew that His acts were God's acts, His resolves God's resolves, and His love God's love; that His thoughts of Redemption were God thinking (and not efforts to think His thoughts after Him), His person God's real presence, and His work the immediate (though not unmediated) action of God turned on every one of us to seek and save. The things He did were not only well pleasing to God but God's deeds. Christ was God saving, and no mere agent of God's salvation. It is a difference which seems sometimes to constitute nothing less than another religion. His knowledge of some things was limited, but there was no limit to His love, to His obedience, to His sense of God's holiness, to His knowledge of the Father's will, His solidarity with it, and with the work given Him to do. With that work He was completely one; and it was this, to make good the actual redeeming presence of God in man, first in His own personal life, and next in the slow experience of history. He was one, that is, with the Kingdom of God. His continuity with the Father is expressed, not in his perception of God, nor in deeds which God approved, but in His habitual action in God's name, in His sense of a life which in its totality set forth God the Redeemer, and, especially, in His power to work in us to this day a work like forgiveness, which is the erection of the Kingdom and the work of God alone. The Unitarian or prophetic view of Christ carries us really no further than the orthodox and Anselmic view. Each is the extreme reaction from the other—on the same line and level. They each reduce Christ to an agent of forgiveness. The one

makes Him an agent before the fact, in that He met a condition which made forgiveness possible; the other makes Him an agent after the fact who made forgiveness public and credible. But He was more than either allows. He did not simply prepare forgiveness by making a satisfaction possible only to a divine nature; nor did He only declare it with all His heart and faith. By His historic personality, His actual life, death, and resurrection, He effects it in us. "He forces us to feel in His forgiving will the mind and will of God. In this act of Christ, God lays hold of us. And as the Saviour winds Himself into our life, it is God Himself that is setting up a real intercourse with us." To know the inner life of Christ is a thing possible to thousands who have no adequate idea of His biography. Indeed, it seems hidden from many who are deeply versed in the biography. But it is, in the same act and by no inference, to know the inner life of God. And though it is a bold and even extreme thing to say, yet it is a thing which the faith, and not merely the theology, of the Church has often said in prayer and hymn, it is a thing which we must always reserve the right to say, with reverent rarity and upon solemn call—in the death of Jesus it was God that died. It is wrung from us by the maturity of our experience of forgiveness, as well as by reflection on its corollaries. And it is the culmination even of a philosophy like Hegel's, who quotes, in pressing his meaning, the hymn, "Gott selbst ist todt." It is a belief from which mere religious intelligence is much more likely to revolt than Christian thought.

Socinianism is a very natural concomitant of an age like the Reformation, or our own, when a new ethical departure is correcting many of the abuses and corruptions of the religious life, and joining with science to criticize the true supernatural out of the historic record or the personal experience. But it is only general when this ethical Christianity has ousted the specific type of Christian experience (especially the central experience of forgiveness), and its decisive perception of the deep meaning of God in Christ. Much of it is due to a not unamiable deficiency in historic and especially spiritual imagination. Now, as in Paul's day, it is patent enough in many quarters that the world by righteousness knows not God, that its spiritual perception is dimmed by the keenness of its ethical sense, and it stands, as Milton's Satan once stood, "stupidly good." To such a mood the law of Christ is clear, but His person is but thinly understood. It is truly intelligible only to the deepest Christian experience, the experience which chiefly inspired the Reformation, the experience of Redemption—in the Christian and not the Buddhist sense of the word—from sin, and not from grief or wrong.

VIII.

But to this experience the uniqueness of the person of Christ is not only intelligible but above all certainties. It is the Revelation which is the light of all our seeing, and the source of all our day. And it is a Revelation which does its own work upon the soul.

It has not to wait for our conclusions on knotty prior points, or our submission to an authority which undertakes to settle them for us. One effect of the true Revelation in Christ is to destroy the abuse of ecclesiastical authority, by removing from the conditions of salvation the scholastic truths which the Church promises the layman to warrant. The saving knowledge of Christ is religious knowledge of Him; by which is meant, not the religious department of knowledge, but a kind of knowledge which is religious, i.e. which is only possible to a genuine religious experience. To this knowledge there are no unintelligible preliminaries. He is unto us Redemption, and *then* we know He is our God. If the Deity of Christ do not stand upon our personal experience of Christ and His forgiving work on man, then it has footing and value only in the schools. Perhaps the most widespread error in Christendom, which is at the root of all its abuse, perversion, and futility, lies here—that assent is demanded from the world for mere statements about Christ as a necessary preliminary of saving, or at least sanctifying, contact with Him. These truths are beyond the intelligence or the verification of most, and so the Church comes to the rescue, with a claim to know and a demand for *implicita fides* which really co-operate with the world in barring men's way to Christ. The priesthood is but the religious form of the tyrannical specialist. Certain statements must be believed, it is said, before you can get any good from Christ. But you are not in a position to believe or disbelieve, you simply do not

understand. Then let *us* understand, and *you* shall believe, says the ecclesiastic. So you shall come to Christ with a clean bill of theology, and a certificate that the necessary preliminaries have been complied with. How can you hope, says the Church, to be blessed by Christ, if you do not approach Him in faith? To approach Him in faith you must at least believe in the Incarnation. You ask what that means. It means, you are told, the mystery of the two natures in one person and the miraculous birth. It is all Greek to you. (Indeed the Greeks had much to do with the ecclesiastical statement of the matter.) But you are invited to a *fides implicita* on the subject, to confide in the religious specialism of the Church, and trust the experts of faith, who, to ease your difficulty, will tell you they only formulate what is in Scripture, and that in believing them you are only believing the Bible. The Bible indeed never demands any faith in itself as a preliminary of faith in Christ. It is for certain truths of Scripture that the claim is made. To ensure the apostolicity of these formal but saving truths, the figment of the apostolic succession of the episcopate had to be invented, by a process which culminated in Irenæus; and truth was based upon office where, at the outset, office had stood upon truth. So one lie leads on to another, as in childhood we were often told. An edifice of falsehood rises round a central delusion. A religion of mere position grows out of a religion of proposition. Orthodoxy demands a miraculous clergy for its vouchers. Their unbroken succession guarantees the purity of necessary but unintelligible

truth. So now concurring in such truth at such hands, you may go to Christ without fear of offending Him—"Lord, I believe in Thy Church and Incarnation ; have mercy on me."

The like use may be made of the doctrine of the Atonement and even the historicity of the Resurrection. The value of the latter in particular is really for faith, not for unfaith ; for the Christian, not for the mere historian. It is worth little as a weapon against the sceptic compared with its worth as a seal to the believer. Its force as a converting agent is but secondary. It is not for the world, but for the Church. It is not a condition of faith, but credible only to faith. It was believers who first believed it. This is an old sneer. We can only confound the enemy by accepting it, and extract the sting by glorying in the fact.

All this procedure is not justification by faith, but by works. It is a matter of labour and difficulty to acquire a belief in the Incarnation in this sense. Many toil a life-time, and hardly gain such a conviction on the subject as would qualify them to appear before the ecclesiastical Christ. It is all a huge mistake. That is not faith at all. Faith is the response to Revelation ; and what God revealed was neither the Incarnation nor the miraculous birth. It was Jesus Christ, the living God as the living man. We have been going the wrong way to work. We have been beginning to build our church at the spire. These great doctrines are most true, but they are the fruit of Christian faith, not its condition. To assent to them is no answer to the divine Revelation. Plenty

assent, and assent intelligently, who never felt Revelation in their lives, and never will. That can only be felt as the soul's reconciled answer to a soul. What has first to be brought to bear upon the world is Christ, not the Incarnation, nor the Atonement, nor even the Resurrection. What is often meant by the Incarnation is the Christian explanation of Christ, rather than God's Revelation in Him. That revelation is life and power, forgiveness and peace. It is Christ as a moral force, as the Almighty spiritual force, as the will and love of God in direct action on the soul for its release. What we have to approach is Christ, the man Christ Jesus. The channel of access is no theory of substance, origin, or person. It is the true, simple manhood of Jesus which we approach, not in search of knowledge or a creed, but of help, forgiveness, strength. It is His business then to convince us of His Godhead, to reveal to us behind His human person the very inward life of God. We have not to begin by explaining Him as a phenomenon, but by responding to His influence and enjoying His benefits. And, while we may criticize His intellectual knowledge, we worship His spiritual place in words no lower than 'My Lord and My God.' Such we know He is, with a certainty no criticism can shake. 'For He hath redeemed my soul from the lowest hell.' This is a redemption whose power depends on the practical effect of Christ's person on us, and it is not destroyed by any criticism of the record. It is the first condition of critical justice to the record. It is *only* the Church that can wield criticism justly. For it is criticism of

the record of One who has done thus and thus for my soul, and still more for the soul of the greatest society on earth—the Church He created, and creates. A mere scholar on the Gospels is like a pedant on a poet; a mere poet on them is like a church window against the sun, beautifying beauty's source.

It is fit here to quote the great words of Melanchthon in the introduction to the first edition of the *Loci*: "*Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia ejus cognoscere non ejus naturas, modos incarnationis, contueri.*" Nor should this, from among many similar passages from Luther, be passed by: "These sophists of schoolmen have painted a Christ. They have set forth the way He is God and man. They have numbered all His bones. They have blended the two natures in strange sort. And it is but sophisticating the knowledge of the Lord Christ after all. Christ is not called Christ because He has two natures. What is that to me? He has this glorious and comfortable name from the office and work He took. That He is by nature God and man, is a matter for Himself. But that He took a certain function, and poured His love out to be my Saviour and Redeemer, that is my comfort and my blessing."[1]

IX.

It is not only the doctrines of Scripture and of Authority that are readjusted under the true light of Revelation, but the doctrine of Redemption itself.

[1] Quoted by Harnack as motto of Book II. in his third vol.

One conclusion we come to is, that the person of Christ can only be understood by His work. This will seem a truism to some who have always held that the Atonement is the true key to the Incarnation. But these are abstractions compared with what is here meant. We mean that the person of Christ can only be understood by His work, His action, upon the world, the Church, and the believing soul—by His effect in experience; that is to say, it can only be *religiously* understood. The authority of the Bible is the authority of Christ's person; and that authority has no other root *for us* than in our experience of His unique and divine function in forgiveness. No views as to the constitution of the Trinity can establish Christ as an authority for the conscience, however impressive they may make Him for the imagination; and in the Catholic Church and theology they have impressed the imagination deeply. But the moral authority of Christ does not experimentally turn upon His consubstantiality with the Father, or His relation to the universe of thought. These positions are efforts at explanation, inevitable but inadequate, on the part of those who had already owned His moral authority. It is in our experience of the actual redeeming effect upon our conscience of the man Jesus that our sense of His authority rests, our sense of His Godhead, and indeed the whole world's ultimate sense of a divine authority at all. And be it noted that it is just the sense of a divine *authority* that the world, after centuries of metaphysical theology, now chiefly needs. The sense of a divine *presence* is not so hard either

to attain or to own. It is attained by mysticism, poetry, religiosity, philosophy and even spiritualism; and it may be owned without much sacrifice of our darling self-will. But the divine *authority*, which ere long will be the one famine in the social soul mad with the peril to its own life, *that* is to be rooted nowhere but on the evangelical foundation of a redeemed conscience. It can rest only on an authority of Christ, drawn, not merely from the fine dignity of His character, or the tradition and succession of a Church, but from that sense of Him given us in the act by which we take the germ of our new life in the shape of forgiveness from His sole hands. The authority in the history of the future is God at the only point where He is indubitable, in His self-revelation and saving action, at the point of Christ in the history of the past. Real history must have an authority which is historically real. And whatever moral science may say, practical morality must, with the democracy, increasingly find its impulse and sanction, not in the apotheosis of the paternal sentiment, but in the evangelical experience of Redemption. If the Gospel do not save society, there is no social force that can; interests outgrow affections and there is no authority left. And by the Gospel is meant the historic actuality of Christ's person and its practical effect upon sinful men.

For a second conclusion about Redemption as Revelation is that in so viewing it we transfer the grievous obstacle in the way of forgiveness from God to man; and we direct the work of Christ accordingly

upon man rather than upon God. What was to be overcome was less God's wrath than man's rebellion. The wrath of God is not a mode of passion, but a phase of Providence; not a temper, but a treatment on God's part as the Holy Redeemer. What was to be extorted was not punishment, but the true practical recognition of God's holiness. Without that God cannot remain God; He would be Father, but a partial not sovereign Father. But it is the very thing that sinful man cannot and will not give. It is an expiation which must be found by God, and not by man; therefore in God. Jesus Christ is the human revelation that it is so found. In Him God honoured within man the law of His own changeless holiness; He condemned sin in the flesh. He made human response to His own holiness, and a response damnatory. It is too much ignored that the revelation in Christ being a revelation of holy love, must be condemnation as earnestly as mercy. In Christ God did not simply show pity on men, but God was in man expiating sin to His own holiness. He revealed the fact that power to do even that was not sought with God in vain.

The extinction of our guilt is a pure, unbought, inexplicable act of miraculous grace. And the revelation of such extinction can only be the transfer of that act of grace into our personal experience. Its transfer, observe, not its declaration. This is a work that no mere declaration could do, no mere exhibition of pure or even devoted love. Only a person's act and experience can be a revelation to a person. Nor is it real till it be transferred within us. In this case

it is God's active experience that must be brought home to us and repeated in us. Such is the work of Christ—to realize and transfer to us the experience of God's holy love in the conditions of sin. It was not to give an equivalent for sin, but to effect in man God's own sense of what sin meant for His holiness. Christ's sorrow and death were a sacrifice offered by God to His own holiness. Christ did feel His death as a divine necessity, a necessity in God, not as an earthly necessity divinely borne. And this feeling on His part, in willing, utter obedience, was God's practical recognition of His own eternal holy nature. Christ accepted sorrow and death at the hands of God's holiness, and bore sin's damnation in humble obedience. And He did so because He knew it was the divine purpose to carry home to us by the effect on Him the holiness of God's love. It was not the sorrow that saved, not even the negative sinlessness of it, but its positive and complete obedience. It was not even the death that saved, but the living act of obedience in it. It was Christ's recognition of it as a divine necessity, which was God Himself meeting the law of His nature and satisfying in man His own holiness.

In some such way may Redemption be treated as Revelation, without becoming a mere exhibition of God's pitiful desire for man, but remaining a work and act of God demanded by His own nature and calculated in its effect to bring us to true saving repentance. As the sole organ of this repentance Christ represents us before God, no less than He represents God to us; and so He is the sole condition of our repentance being saving repentance with God. Nothing here said is meant to impugn the uniqueness of Christ's work for us all. As His religion was essentially different from that of other men, so was His sacrifice. It was not simply the classic instance of the cross we have all to bear. When we have done all, something has to be done in our stead, something unique in its bearing on human sin before God.

In what sense the person of Christ is Revelation, is therefore only to be understood when we appreciate in experience the value of His work for us as sinful men. It is no final revelation for sinless intelligence. The philosophical discussion of this person is full of intense interest and all but supreme value; but for our moral need, which is *the* need of Humanity, it is comparatively sterile. Only the beneficiaries of the cross can effectually discuss the cross, and through it the Incarnation—of which the cross, and not the birth, is the key; the cross, and not the miraculous birth, because the one can be verified in our Christian experience, while the other is a question of the record alone, and cannot. It is the one and not the other that is *used* in Scripture. It is in the one, not in the other, that our certainty lies, and so our Revelation; for nothing is Revelation in the close use of words, which is not verifiable in our Christian experience.

With regard to revelation before Christ and outside Christ, that is so far from being denied here that it is only the revelation in Christ which enables *us* to call these real revelations at all, and which seals the soul of

them as the prelude of that complete and saving self-donation in God which in Christ was won and assured for ever. The certainty which only *visited* the heralds of the Kingdom *abides* with us by the indwelling of Him who is the Kingdom. It is only in Christ that their certainty, their revelationary element, is verified and transferred to us.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it may be added in closing, is one that needs re-examination from our point of view. But upon that we cannot enter here. We can but confess His Power, beseech His presence, and beg Him to amend the flaws that lurk in every such effort as this to search His depths and account for His mighty doings in our souls.

IV.

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

ERIC A. LAWRENCE.