

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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Published monthly by
THE PRESBYTERIAN AND
REFORMED PUBLISHING CO.,
501 Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., Pa.

MID-AUGUST, 1931
Vol. 2 No. 4

\$1.00 A YEAR EVERYWHERE
Entered as second-class matter May 11, 1931, at
the Post Office at Philadelphia, Pa., under the
Act of March 3, 1879.

The Cosmic Significance of Christ

IN a previous issue (September, 1930), under the title "CHRIST and Christianity," we pointed out the place that CHRIST occupies in the religion that He founded—a place so central that CHRIST Himself is Christianity to such an extent that apart from Him there is and can be no such thing as Christianity in any proper sense of the word.

It is evident, however, that we cannot see in CHRIST a proper object of religious worship—in harmony with the New Testament and the great historic creeds—without seeing in Him one who sustains relations to the universe as a whole as well as to mankind. If we saw in JESUS simply the first Christian—so that to be a Christian is to believe *like* JESUS rather than *in* or *on* JESUS—there would be no occasion for our thinking of Him in cosmical terms. It is otherwise, however, when we see in Him an object of worship. Unless JESUS occupies a position in the universe as a whole that warrants our calling him God, we can worship Him only at the cost of rendering to a creature what belongs only to the Creator. This means that what we regard as the Christian attitude toward JESUS is rooted in the conviction that He not only occupies the central place in Christianity but a central place in the universe as a whole.

What has just been said might seem to imply that the place that CHRIST occupies in the universe as a whole is a truth we infer from what the Scriptures teach rather than a truth explicitly taught in the Scriptures. No such implication is intended. It is true, of course, that most frequent mention is made of the relations

that He sustains to men as teacher, friend, example, saviour, master, and such like, but at the same time they clearly teach that He occupies a position in the universe as a whole that is nothing short of central. JOHN and PAUL spoke not only for themselves but for all the writers of the New Testament when with JESUS in mind they wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD. All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John I: 1-3); "Who is the image of the invisible GOD, the first born of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him

all things consist" (Colossians I:15-17).

It is not enough, then, that we think of CHRIST as the Saviour of the world and as the LORD and Life of humanity. We gladly admit that those who see in Him their Saviour as well as their LORD and King have laid hold on that which is most vital for them; and yet it is by no means a matter of indifference whether men see in Him at the same time—as did JOHN and PAUL—the creator, sustainer, and goal of the universe as a whole.

There are various considerations that indicate the importance of our keeping in mind the place that JESUS CHRIST occupies in the universe as a whole. The following may be mentioned:

1. Unless we see in JESUS one whose rank in the scale of being places Him by the side of GOD, and so one whose place in the universe is such a place as GOD occupies, we cannot believe in the incarnation as taught in the New Testament; because the thought most essential to such an incarnation is the thought that GOD himself in the person of His Son assumed the flesh of our humanity, and "so was and continueth to be GOD and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, forever."

2. Back of the conviction that JESUS is Saviour of men and their rightful LORD and King, in the New Testament meaning of these terms, lies, expressed or unexpressed, the thought of the relations He sustains to the universe as a whole. Deny these wider relations and only those who fail to think their convictions through would be able to see in Him their Saviour and LORD—for time and eternity. Only one who sustains such relations to the

IN THIS ISSUE:

Some Supernatural Marks in the Old Testament.....	4
E. Van Deusen	
Notes on Biblical Exposition.....	6
J. G. Machen	
Authority in Religion.....	8
Wm. Bittle Wells	
Books of Religious Significance.....	11
Questions and Answers.....	13
Letters to the Editor.....	14
Current Views and Voices.....	16
Ministerial Changes.....	18
News of the Church.....	19

an extent that he can write, "The way to the cleansing of life is Christ's way. There is no new way. It is two thousand years old. But it remains the one sure way to make the angel dominate the beast within our hearts," it is not to be supposed that Dr. Russell writes in ignorance or indifference to the new ways that are so widely commended. While nowhere obtruding his knowledge of psychology or philosophy or criticism within his pages, it is clear that he is no stranger to their claims and conclusions.

This is by no means a theological book (in the ordinary meaning of the word) but a sound theology underlies it and pulses through all its pages. It recognizes that there is need of expiation as well as of cleansing of the soul and nothing is more commendable about the book than the stress it places on the great thought expressed by John when he wrote, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Dr. Russell does not balk at the thought of a supernatural deliverance from sin and death and hell and realizes that central to that supernatural deliverance is the death that Christ died upon the Cross. "If at first," he writes, "we balk at the clear teaching that we must be born again, we shall come back to it when once we have thought ourselves through to final conclusions. We shall find that our unguided speculations have led us nowhere. We shall come back to the Gospel of Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, unto the Greeks foolishness, unto the natural man a hopeless riddle, but unto them which believe, both Jews and Greeks and modern men, the power of God and the wisdom of God."

In concluding he writes: "Many clergymen and more laymen have abandoned, or have never believed, the view of Atonement here set forth. It is not a view which is in popular favor. But it is discarded only at the cost of throwing overboard the clear teaching of the New Testament. And the fact that it is not in popular favor proves nothing as to its truth. Though it is not emphasized today, it will be tomorrow. Time's revenges are time's reversals. Men will grow weary of the endless reiteration that Christianity is merely a 'way of life.' Their hearts will tell them, first of all, that it is a redemption—or it is nothing. Christian thought will turn again with new joy and enthusiasm to its central verity. It will demand from its leaders and interpreters the essential meaning of Calvary without glosses or reservations. It will demand a Christ lifted on a Cross, the glory of a world's sole hope gathering around that head sublime. . . . All have need of His sacrifice, for all are sinners. All may have access to it, for whosoever will may come. All should most certainly avail themselves of it, for the acceptance of God's great plan for the cleansing of life means forgiveness;

it means peace; it means the fulfillment of our destiny. Without it we are fatherless in time and homeless in eternity. With it we enter into our heritage as sons of God. And if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, with power and purpose and divinity, both now and in the life to come, as our inalienable legacy."

This is not a "high brow" book. The ordinary reader will not need to consult his dictionary in order to understand it. But it deals in an interesting and intelligent as well as helpful way with a matter of universal human concern.

"Purification before the great God
"Is greater than life and is stronger
than death;
"Is the hope of the wise and the prize
of the saint."

S. G. C.

THE GEOLOGICAL-AGES HOAX: A Plea for Logic in Theoretical Geology by George McCready Price. Fleming H. Revell Co. Pp. 126. \$1.25.

THE object of this little book is to make clear to the general reader that there is no warrant for the notion that the age of rock formations can be determined by the fossils they contain. It is Mr. Price's contention that the view commonly held by geologists that the time when certain rocks were deposited can be learned from the nature of the fossils they contain—and conversely that the time when certain plants and animals lived can be learned from the nature of the rocks in which their fossil remains are found—rests upon pretended knowledge to such a degree that it "must be looked upon as a hoax, a practical joke on a confiding public."

If Mr. Price is right in this contention—a contention that he has set forth more fully in previous books, particularly in his volume of some 700 pages entitled *The New Geology*—important consequences follow. In that case one of the main supports of the theory of evolution is removed; and most of what has been written about the alleged geological "ages" through which this earth has passed must be classed as fiction rather than history.

It is no doubt true that the name of Price is anathema in "orthodox" geological circles. The thing of importance, however, is not his standing in geological society but the validity of the arguments he adduces against the time value of the fossils. Denunciation is hardly an adequate substitute for evidence, but it would seem that as yet "orthodox" geologists have made no other reply to Price. If an answer to Price, refuting his contention is not soon forthcoming from "orthodox" geologists, the impression will become general not only that they are unable to refute his arguments, but that they are aware of that inability. We hold no brief for Mr. Price—possibly he is as poor a geologist as he is a theologian

(he is, we believe, a Seventh Day Adventist)—but we have been greatly impressed by his arguments and if they are refutable we would like to see them refuted. A reply to Mr. Price from the side of the "orthodox" geologists is, it seems to us, long overdue.

Mr. Price maintains that the "orthodox" geologists are guilty of circular reasoning, arguing as the occasion demands that the fossils determine the age of the rocks or the rocks the age of the fossils. More particularly he argues that no sound conclusions can be drawn as to the age of a fossil from the rock in which it is found, or *vice versa*, because of the order of sequence in which the rocks are actually found. According to Price the rocks have not been deposited in anything like an invariable order, the "older" rocks sometimes being above the "younger," in fact are found in all sorts of relations over large areas. "The fossils do not occur in any definite order, as has been alleged; hence it is nonsense to attach any time-value to any particular fossil or set of fossils." In accounting for the fossils he attaches large significance to the story of the Flood as recorded in Genesis. While he does not maintain that the Flood accounts for all the fossil deposits yet he does maintain that a great world catastrophe of that sort is supported by scientific evidence and offers the best explanation of the facts that call most loudly for explanation.

The reader will find this an interesting book whatever the extent of his agreement with its author's conclusions. Whatever may be thought of Mr. Price as a geologist it must be confessed that he possesses in a rare degree the gift of popular exposition.

S. G. C.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES by Frank E. Allen. The Christopher Publishing Co., Boston. 827 pages. \$3.50.

OUR examination of this book leads us to think that it is a volume of great worth. It is an effort—and a very successful one—to set forth the doctrines and lessons of the one book that contains an authentic history of the first generation of the Christian Church while keeping the machinery of exegesis in the background. While it has back of it the labor of the scholar it is fitted to meet the need of the general reader as well as Ministers and teachers. The arrangement of the material is admirably adapted to the requirements of Bible students. Outlines precede and questions follow each chapter. Dr. Leander S. Keyser writes an appreciative Foreword in which he praises its style as well as its contents. In concluding, Dr. Keyser states that "for practical purposes it is the best expository and applicatory treatment of the Acts with which I am acquainted." We share Dr. Keyser's estimate of the volume and take pleasure in commending it to the attention of our readers.

S. G. C.