

# The Princeton Theological Review

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REFORMED THEOLOGY TODAY\*

MR. PRESIDENT, GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FATHERS AND BRETHREN :

I have a very profound sense of unworthiness in taking up the duties of the Chair to which you have called me—a Chair made famous by the illustrious men who have preceded me, and whose labours have helped to give Princeton Seminary a fame throughout the world for sound learning and true piety. We think today of Archibald Alexander, that man of God, the first Professor in this Seminary; of Charles Hodge, whose Systematic Theology today remains as probably the greatest exposition of the Reformed Theology in the English language; of Archibald Alexander Hodge, a man of rare popular gifts and of unusual metaphysical ability; and last, but not least, excelling them all in erudition, of Dr. Warfield, whose recent death has left us bereft of our leader and of one of the greatest men who have ever taught in this Institution.

I would pause a moment to pay a tribute to his memory. He was my honoured teacher and friend. For twenty years I had the privilege of helping him in this department, and drew inspiration from his broad minded scholarship. At the time of his death he was, I think, without an equal as a theologian in the English speaking world. With Doctors Kuyper and Bavinck of Holland, he made up a great trio of outstanding exponents of the Reformed Faith. His loss is simply irreparable. But he has gone to his reward, to

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\* An Inaugural Address delivered by Caspar Wistar Hodge on the occasion of his induction into the Charles Hodge Chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology, Miller Chapel, October 11th, 1921.

## THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE AND THE SUPERNATURAL

In the Acts of the Apostles, Christianity is spoken of as "the Way" and Christians as "those of the Way." This mode of speech witnesses to the fact that from the very beginning Christianity was looked upon as more than a creed, more than a world-view. It makes clear that whatever else Christianity meant for the early Christians it meant a way of life, a particular mode of conduct, that it indicated the lines along which men's activities should proceed, that it marked out the course they must pursue if they would reach the true goal of human life. We are not, indeed, dependent on those passages in which Christianity is spoken of as "the Way" and Christians as "those of the Way"—passages that are confined to the book of Acts—for our knowledge that, whatever else Christianity is, it is an ethical movement, and that no orthodoxy of thought, no punctilious observance of religious rites, no generosity in support of, or labor in behalf of, religious movements or organizations, will lead it to look with favor on the man whose way is the way of sin and iniquity. No matter to what part of its authoritative writings we turn we find this thought clearly and forcibly expressed. Antinomians may have minimized the significance of this, but, allowing for these few exceptions, those calling themselves Christians have always recognized not only that Christianity is an ethical movement but that we are perfected Christians in proportion as its ethic finds embodiment in our daily walk and conversation. The typical Christian has always been as sensible of ethical duty as exuberant with spiritual hope. The absence of endeavor to live the sort of life Christianity commends has always been regarded as *prima facie* evidence of the presence of a non-Christian.

Not only has it been generally recognized that Christianity, whatever else it may be, is a way of life; until recently it was all but universally recognized, in Europe and

America at least, that the Christian way of life is unsurpassed. Within the memory of living men even those who rejected the doctrines of Christianity, together with the facts of which they are but the interpretation, vied with each other in extolling the superiority of the Christian ethic. The oft-quoted words of John Stuart Mill were written as recently as 1873 and reflect what was then, and what continued for some time after that to be, the common view, even among convinced non-Christians. "The most valuable part of the effect on character which Christianity has produced by holding up in a divine person a standard of excellence and a model of imitation," he wrote, "is available even to the absolute unbeliever, and can never more be lost to humanity. . . . Whatever else may be taken from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left: a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal preaching. . . . Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even yet would it be easy, even for the unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than the endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."<sup>1</sup> Our fathers, not to mention our grandfathers, were not called upon to defend their ethical ideals. Practically everybody admitted their superiority. This, however, is no longer the case. At the present time there is no element of the Christian confession more openly assailed than the Christian ethic. One of the most outstanding characteristics of modern thinking is the wide-spread repudiation of the Christian ideal of conduct. Nietzsche was the first outstanding thinker of modern times to openly assail the Christian way of life; and he counted it one of the chief marks of his greatness that he had discovered the real nature of the ethics of Christianity. In *Ecce Homo*<sup>2</sup> he wrote: "That which deifies

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<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> P. 139.

me, that which makes me stand apart from the whole of the rest of humanity, is the fact that I have unmasked Christian morality. . . . Christian morality is the most malignant form of all falsehood, the actual Circe of humanity, that which has corrupted mankind." Others may not be as outspoken in their rejection of the Christian ethic, but they are wholly at one with Nietzsche in the repudiation of the Christian ideal as the highest known, and do not hesitate to affirm that the highest type of man is other than the Christian man. Figgis is well within the truth when he writes: "On all hands we hear preached a revival of Paganism. Christianity as an ethical ideal is contemned. Formerly Christians were charged with hypocrisy because they fell short of the ideal. The charge was false, although the fact was true. We do fail, fail miserably, to come up to our ideal, and always shall, so long as it remains an ideal. Nowadays the Christian is attacked not because he fails, but in as far as he succeeds. Our Lord himself is scorned, not because he is not the revealer of Love, but because he is. Hardly a single specifically Christian value is left as it was."<sup>3</sup>

How shall we explain this changed attitude toward the Christian ideal of character and conduct on the part of so many? Lionel Spencer Thornton in his valuable book *Conduct and the Supernatural* mentions four contributory causes: (1) the Rationalism of the eighteenth century, (2) the general outlook upon the world-process derived from the evolutionist theory, (3) the fatalism of the idealist philosophy of the nineteenth century, (4) the repudiation of Christian dogma. He rightly stresses, we think, the repudiation of Christian dogma as the most important of these contributory causes. In marked distinction from those who speak glibly of an undogmatic Christianity he writes: "The repudiation of Christian moral standards is a direct and entirely natural result of the earlier rejection of Christian dogma. No doubt far-seeing theologians foresaw all

<sup>3</sup> *The Will to Freedom*, p. 4.

along that this would be the case; but those who repudiated the Christian creed did not themselves see it. It is indeed safe to say that they had no suspicion of it. There are still, perhaps, a few pedants who declare that the essence of Christianity is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and that one can be a good Christian by practising the imitation of Christ, without taking any notice of the traditional dogmas. Such people are living in a fools' paradise; for all around them at this moment are living proofs of the fallacy of their opinions. If there is one thing that can be said with absolute certainty about this whole movement with which we are dealing, it is that the revolt against the Christian ethic is due to the previous repudiation of the doctrines upon which it is founded. The two things, belief and conduct, are indissolubly bound together; they are parts of one whole, as the roots and the fruit are both alike parts of one tree, organically connected."<sup>4</sup>

In our judgment Thornton has directed attention to the more important of the proximate causes contributing to the wide-spread denial of the right of Christianity to furnish the individual and society with moral ideals. We cannot overlook these causes and adequately account for the present situation; and yet if we are seeking the ultimate cause, that which lies at the root of this changed attitude toward the Christian ethic, we must turn our attention to that naturalism of thought and sentiment which is, perhaps, the most striking characteristic of the age in which we live. This antisupernaturalism is rooted, historically speaking, in the so-called "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century. Previous to that time all life and world views, whether within or without the circle of special revelation, had been supernaturalistic to the core. As Bavinck says: "The religious supernaturalistic world-view has universally prevailed among all people and all ages down to the present day, and only in the last hundred and fifty years has given away in some circles to the empirico-scientific."<sup>5</sup> Nothing is

<sup>4</sup> *Conduct and the Supernatural*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *The Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 1.

more characteristic, however, of the empirico-scientific conception that then made its appearance than its thorough-going naturalism, the resolute manner in which it turns its back on all supernaturalism, and supposes itself able to find in this world all that thought and life can ask. This new system of thought and life, this modern empirico-scientific world-view, separates itself, therefore, not only from the Christian but from all preceding world-views inasmuch as it professes to explain the entire world, including man and religion and morality, without the aid of any supernatural factor, purely from resident forces and according to unvarying laws. And therein it takes up a position of determined and thorough-going antagonism to Christianity such as characterized no previous life and world-view, and such, we may be sure, that no future life and world-view will surpass it in this respect. No doubt the leading immediate cause of this changed attitude toward the Christian ideal of conduct was the repudiation of the Christian doctrines, together with the denial of the historicity of the facts of which they are the interpretation, but back of this repudiation of the facts and doctrines of Christianity lies the acceptance of a naturalistic view of the universe and consequently a repudiation of the supernaturalism of Christianity. This is not said in criticism of Thornton as though he failed to see the ultimate cause. The very fact that he entitled his book *Conduct and the Supernatural* makes clear that in his judgment the struggle for and against the Christian ethic is ultimately one with the struggle for and against the supernaturalism of Christianity.

There are still those—though we suppose their number is rapidly decreasing—who hold that the Christian ethic does not stand or fall with the supernaturalism of Christianity. Dr. Raymond Calkins, for instance, a man of ability and standing in the Congregational Church, has recently published a little book, *The Christian Idea in the Modern World*, “to vindicate the reasonableness and practicability of the Christian Idea, to show that it is the only one which

does justice to all the elements of human nature, and is the only one that can be trusted to deal adequately with the problems of our modern world" in which he maintains that the tenability of the Christian ethic is independent of the supernaturalism of Christianity; and hence that to dispose of the supernaturalism of Christianity is not to dispose of its moral ideals. In vindicating the practicability of the Christian ideal of conduct in the modern world Dr. Calkins' efforts merit some consideration; but we are confident that the logic of the situation is dead against him when he supposes he can vindicate either its reasonableness or its practicability while assuming an attitude of indifference toward the supernaturalism of Christianity, and that because he and those who think with him fail to realize that "the Christian religion is a unity, a supernatural way of living, based upon and inspired by supernatural facts and truths."

In order to perceive that the logic of the situation is dead against those who think they can vindicate the reasonableness and practicability of the Christian ethic while leaving the supernatural out of consideration—and on the side of Nietzsche who here agrees with Paul and the "far-seeing theologians" alluded to by Thornton—it is only necessary, it seems to us, to realize the place that the supernatural occupies in Christianity as a way of life. Unless we are altogether mistaken, to realize the manner in which the supernatural is implicated in the Christian way of life is to have brought home to us the fact that the supernatural is no less essential to Christian ethics than it is to Christian theology. As a system of thought Christianity is wholly without content, as empty as astronomy would be if the stars were but phantoms, apart from the "supernatural fact, which is God; the supernatural act, which is miracle; the supernatural book, which is the revealed will of God; the supernatural redemption, which is the divine deed of the divine Christ; the supernatural salvation, which is the divine work of the divine Spirit." The point we stress now, however, is that the supernatural is as essential to Christianity considered

as a way of life as it is to Christianity considered as a creed or system of thought. Here too, we maintain, the supernatural is the very breath of its nostrils rather than an appendage that can be lopped off for the sake of making it acceptable to the present age, so that Christianity desupernaturalized is Christianity extinct. In proof of this we desire to call the reader's attention to the manner in which the supernatural is inextricably implicated in the Christian way of life.

I. We cannot even get into the Christian way of life apart from the supernatural. When we first take note of our whereabouts we find ourselves in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, not in the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Moreover by the use of merely natural means, those powers that inhere in us as men, we are unable to forsake the broad way and get into the narrow way. This is not because the Christian way of life is barred, as it were, by stone walls and iron gates, but because of our inability, our sheer lack of power, to leave the one and enter the other. We cannot confess that we are dead in trespasses and sin and yet suppose that of our own will and by our own power we can exemplify the Christian ethic. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Is it not forever true that only the good tree is able to produce good fruit, while the evil tree always and everywhere produces only evil fruit? We might as well suppose that dead and decaying Lazarus of his own initiative and of his own strength could have clothed himself anew with the garments of youthful flesh as suppose that we of our own will and by our own powers can set our feet in the path that leadeth unto life eternal. Only as a supernatural power energizes within us is it possible for us to rise up and walk in newness of life. Regeneration, re-birth through the operation of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary before we can even get into the way of life, according to Christianity.

No doubt a different representation is widely current today. We are told rather: "The gates along the way of



life stand open: whosoever will may enter in." As used, moreover, these words are not merely meant to emphasize the universality of the gospel offer; they are meant rather to emphasize man's plenary ability to work out his own salvation. In harmony with this we are constantly told that the parable of the Prodigal Son contains the core of the Gospel, even the whole of the Gospel. We have no desire to minimize the value of this parable but we are not blind to the fact that there is no Christ, no atonement, no Holy Spirit in it. But what is the Gospel without these? If this parable contains the whole or even the core of the Gospel, then, we, altogether of our own will and power, can get up and go back to God whenever we choose—no questions asked and a warm reception assured. No doubt such a conception is pleasing to the naturalistically-minded, but, multitudes to the contrary, this is not the Christian conception. The fact that in wide circles the whole saving process is naturalistically conceived is merely an indication of the extent to which the so-called New Protestantism has departed from Christianity. We are more immediately concerned to point out that there is no place here for the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit at the initiation of the saving process. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit at every stage of the saving process; but just now we are concerned to point out that apart from the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit we cannot even get the process started. The teachings of Jesus are not yet antiquated. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." If we are walking in the Christian way of life it is fundamentally because we have been recreated in Christ Jesus by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit. When it is said that salvation is the human response "I will" to the Master's call "You can," apart from such action on the part of the Holy Spirit, a way of life other than the Christian is being preached. We may profitably ponder these words of Dr. Warfield in this connection: "It is not enough to believe that God has

intervened in this natural world of ours and wrought a supernatural redemption; and that He has Himself made known to men His mighty acts and unveiled to them the significance of His working. It is upon a field of the dead that the Sun of righteousness has risen, and the shouts that announce His advent fall on deaf ears: yea, even though the morning stars should again sing for joy, and the air be palpitant with the echo of the great proclamation, their voice could not penetrate the ears of the dead. As we sweep our eyes over the world lying in its wickedness, it is the valley of the prophet's vision which we see before us: a valley that is filled with bones, and lo! they are very dry. How shall we stand and cry, 'O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord!' In vain the redemption, in vain its proclamation, unless there come a breath from heaven to breathe upon these slain that they may live. The redemption of Christ is therefore no more central to the Christian hope than the creative operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart: and the supernatural redemption itself would remain a mere name outside of us and beyond our reach, were it not realized in the subjective life by an equally supernatural application."<sup>6</sup>

II. There is no progress along the Christian way of life apart from the supernatural. It is not enough that after having been helped into the narrow way we be told, "This is the way; walk ye in it." We need to know the rules and regulations of the road, we need adequate and dependable directions lest we lose our way. Moreover as rational creatures we need to have motives or incentives brought to bear on us to induce us to walk in this way rather than some other. Still further we must have sufficient energy or power to enable us to propel ourselves along the way designated. Whether we consider the directions that have been given us, or the incentives that are brought to bear upon us, or the power that enables us to move along the lines desired, we are forcibly reminded that there is no

<sup>6</sup> *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Jan. 1897, p. 72.

progress along the Christian way of life apart from the supernatural.

The directions that have been given us, and which we must follow if we would make progress along the Christian way are of supernatural origin. They come to us as a revelation of the will of God. This means that Christianity does not look upon its moral code, its ethical ideal, whether as expressed in words or embodied in the life of its founder, as naturalistic in origin any more than it looks upon its creed as naturalistic in origin. If man had been left to himself to work out his destiny on the plane of nature he would, according to Christianity, be as ignorant of the Christian standard of conduct as he would be ignorant of the Christian dogmas. It is contrary to Christianity's own representation of the matter to suppose that the superstructure of Christian morality can be erected on a naturalistic foundation. The morality of Christianity is not a man-made thing. It is divine and authoritative because it is a revealed morality, an expression of the will of God. According to Christianity the moral standard is objective, in the will of God rather than the will of man, and thus assumes the reality and activity of the supernatural. Either, therefore, the Christian ideal of conduct is ungrounded and destined to pass away, or it rests on a supernatural basis. In short the directions that have been given us are either of supernatural origin and so reliable, or in the nature of the case they are deceptive and misleading.

When we are told "This is the way; walk ye in it," even though the exhortation be accompanied with directions telling us when to turn to the right and when to the left, the question arises: Why should we proceed along the way suggested? You tell me I ought to live a Christian life. I ask, Why? Perhaps some other sort of life appeals to me more strongly. And if you are to persuade me that I ought to do as you say you must convince me that Christianity is true, that it alone points out the way that leads to God and peace and happiness. Only on the assumption that

Christianity is true is there any lasting warrant for saying I ought to live a Christian life. But though it be granted that Christianity is the true religion and teaches the way of God in truth—an assumption that can be made only as we recognize the reality and activity of the supernatural—yet there is still need of additional motives or incentives to induce us to proceed along the Christian way, and in proportion as we appreciate these incentives will we speed rather than lag along the way. I am especially concerned just now to point out that the main motives and incentives advanced by Christianity to induce us to proceed along the Christian way are drawn from the supernatural. Christian ethics do not disdain motives drawn from purely earthly considerations—those derived from expediency in the use of the things of this world, consideration for our fellows, love of country and such like—but it attaches chief significance to motives that have no existence from the viewpoint of naturalism, those derived from God and his love. The motive drawn from the thought of rewards and punishments in a future life is not absent from Christian ethics. But while this motive is appealed to—a motive that has no point apart from the reality of a supernatural world—yet its place is near the periphery rather than at the center. The central and controlling motive in the life of the Christian is represented as grateful love to the redeeming God who mercifully set his love upon us and sent his Son to die for us. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.” The grace of God is the supreme motive—“I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” No doubt we all act from mixed motives, but if this motive has no place in our lives it is quite certain that we are not walking in the Christian way of life. And yet only as we recognize the supernatural is there any such motive with which to reckon. When we

ask for the reason why we should walk in the Christian way we are always pointed to supernatural considerations. Even when mere earthly motives are appealed to they are not appealed to apart from these more ultimate motives.

It is not enough, however, that we be directed aright and that we be persuaded that we are in the way we want to go. We may have the latest model automobile; we may have studied our Blue Book and be certain of our route; we may be anxious to follow the route chosen; but, if there is no gasoline in our tank or our ignition system is not working, we cannot advance a single mile. And so it is not enough that we know the Christian way of life and that incentives be brought to bear upon us to lead us to walk in that way. Ethical teachers of all ages have bewailed the fact that "men know the good without the power to do it and that they know the evil without the power to avoid it." What we need more than instruction and more than incentive is power, an energy that will enable us to realize the Christian ideal of conduct in our own lives. Apart from such a power we may dream of being good but we will never be good. And the more earnestly we strive to be good the sooner will we be driven to make our own the despairing cry to which Paul gave such striking expression; "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." On the plane of the natural the antithesis between the ideal and its fulfilment is irreconcilable. We must look beyond the natural if we are to regard the Christian ideal as realizable. It is because and only because Christianity looks beyond the natural to the supernatural that it has the courage to affirm that its ideal is translatable into terms of human conduct. It proclaims not only an ideal but a dynamic adequate for the realization of that ideal. This dynamic is found in the supernatural

Christ acting through the Holy Spirit. Apart from the living Christ the Christian ideal would confessedly be but a beautiful ideal, an unrealized and unrealizable vision. It is because and only because we can do all things through Him that strengtheneth us that it is possible to get the Christian ideal expressed in terms of human life and character. Apart from this element of power Jesus would still possess significance as a moral and spiritual teacher; and yet He would differ merely in degree and not in kind from men like Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and Confucius and others. Because of this element of power, He occupies an absolutely unique place among the moral and spiritual teachers of mankind. Others may hold before us visions of truth and duty. Jesus not only holds before us the highest of all ethical ideals, He enables us to realize that ideal. Surely we cannot perceive the significance of the living Christ as a moral and spiritual dynamic, according to Christianity, without realizing how impossible it is to make progress along the Christian way apart from the supernatural. The power that enables us to walk along the Christian way makes clear, as perhaps no other consideration, the indispensableness of the supernatural to Christianity considered as a way of life. And herewith is given also the reason why we cannot vindicate the practicability of the Christian ideal apart from the supernatural. We may indeed show that the Christian ideal is the best known, and that this would be an infinitely more desirable world in which to live if it was generally embraced and lived; but we cannot show that it is practicable simply because it requires the supernatural to make it operative. As well expect an automobile to run without gasoline or a spark as expect men to make progress along the Christian way of life apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit.

III. When we speak of Christianity as a way of life we imply not merely that it prescribes the path along which we ought to walk but that this path leads somewhere, that when followed it will bring us to a definite goal. If

now we consider the end of the way, we will have impressed upon us anew the futility of supposing we can retain the Christian ethic while ignoring the supernatural. The naturalist may get along without an eschatology; the Christian cannot because his goal lies in the world beyond. We should indeed be on our guard against supposing that Christianity regards earthly blessings as valueless, and that it prizes only the world-shunning and contemplative life. The shibboleth of Christianity is not separation from the world but only from that which is evil in the world. And yet unquestionably it finds its center of gravity in the life to come, so that it is impossible to vindicate the reasonableness of its ideal of conduct save as we recognize that supernaturalism in which alone it finds its proper setting. Unless there be an immortality of blessedness to which the Christian way of life leads, the Christian is of all men most deceived. On the assumption that there is no such supernatural fact as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that the present economy is but a short span of life between two eternities of death, it is altogether certain that the Christian ethic does not indicate the sort of men we need to be and the lines along which our activities may most profitably proceed. How impossible it is to erect the superstructure of Christian morality on a naturalistic foundation appears when we consider that the center of its gravity lies in a supernatural world. Whenever such an attempt is made it topples over of its own weight.

We have called attention to the manner in which the supernatural is implicated in Christianity as a way of life. We do not pretend, of course, that we have done this in an exhaustive manner. It is impossible to bring out the pervasive manner in which the supernatural is implicated in the Christian ethic merely by directing attention to particular points in the Christian life where the supernatural seems most clearly involved. Just as impossible as it is, for instance, to set forth the strength of the evidence that the New Testament teaches the deity of Christ by calling atten-

tion to the texts in which it is definitely asserted. Just as the New Testament everywhere takes for granted that Jesus was divine so the Christian ethic constantly takes the supernatural for granted even when no mention is made of it. From first to last it proceeds on the assumption that there is a natural world and that there is a supernatural world. It does not despise the natural world but it recognizes that the earthly and visible sphere is constantly under the influence and derives its significance and value from being correlated with an invisible and transcendental world. It not only looks to an end not of earth; its center of gravity is always in the transcendental and supernatural. For the Christian God is the center and His will the ruling principle of action. Hence not merely some but all of our activities should be done as unto the Lord. Moreover, according to the Christian ethic, the supernatural is not involved in any external or mechanical fashion. The supernatural is not to be conceived after a deistic but after a thoroughly theistic fashion, not merely as transcendent but equally as immanent. In its operation the supernatural is not merely an influence exerted outside of and upon man. It is a power that works within the soul. The mystical union of the Christian with the risen Christ must not be minimized. So little is the supernatural thought of after a deistic or mechanical fashion that the Christian is thought of as one who can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." But while we have not indicated all the ways in which the supernatural is implicated in the Christian ethic, yet it seems to us, that we have made clear that the supernatural is so inextricably implicated in it as to preclude the possibility of vindicating either the reasonableness or the practicability of its way of life apart from a frank recognition of the supernatural as a factor in human life. If we have done this we have accomplished our purpose.

If our main contention be at all sound it is difficult to



exaggerate the seriousness of the issue for and against the supernatural as a factor in human life. It has been customary for the enemies of Christianity to maintain that they were opposed not to its moral ideals but to the puerilities of its supernatural creed. Mill and Huxley and Matthew Arnold, for instance, denied the supernaturalism of the Christian creed but praised the Christian mode of life. Apparently they were unaware that the supernatural is inextricably implicated in the Christian ethic. Nietzsche saw more clearly. He had the insight to perceive that the Christian ethic is organically connected with the Christian creed; and having rejected the Christian creed he saw that the logic of the situation demanded that he wage war against the Christian ideal of life. And since his days it is increasingly admitted by those who reject the supernaturalism of Christianity—the more thoughtful Christians had always admitted it—that Nietzsche was right. Hence we may be sure that the time is rapidly approaching when it will be generally true that those who reject the Christian creed will also reject the Christian way of life. It is scarcely likely that the case of George Eliot will ever be duplicated. She wholly rejected the supernaturalism of Christianity, was in fact virtually an atheist, and yet she maintained and commended the Christian ideal of life. It is difficult to suppose that the future will contain a person of outstanding ability who will defend the Christian ethic while rejecting the Christian creed. More and more those who reject the supernaturalism of its creed will reject its ideal of life both as unreasonable and impractical. We look forward to the time when the non-Christian world will be as unanimous in rejecting the Christian way of life as it is in rejecting the Christian creed. In the struggle for and against the supernaturalism of Christianity, it is not merely the Christian creed that is at stake. It is equally true that the Christian morality is at stake. If the present attempt to uproot faith in the supernaturalism of Christianity should succeed, therefore, it would mean an end of our Christian culture and

civilization and the supplanting of this culture and civilization by another type of culture and civilization. Because ethics is the soul of all culture. That which distinguishes a Christian from a non-Christian civilization, that which distinguishes non-Christian civilizations from each other, is not so much their relative developments in the arts and literature, in science and agriculture, in industry and commerce, as in the ethical ideals that pervade and control them. The chief representatives of every type of culture confess that the highest good of humanity does not consist exclusively, or even principally, in the improvement of material welfare. Even Haeckel regarded the worship of the true, the good, and the beautiful as the kernel of culture. When, therefore, the moral ideals of Christianity are attacked a shot is fired at the very heart of our Christian culture and civilization.

When Christianity entered the world it found a world rich in culture and highly developed in its civilization. With that culture and civilization Christianity engaged in a life and death struggle that lasted for some three hundred years and in which at great cost and sacrifice it conquered. As a result the hegemony of the Western world passed into the hands of Christianity. Since that time the right of Christianity to furnish the individual and society with its moral ideals was not seriously questioned until quite recently. In fact though the plant, one of whose products is the denial of the right of Christianity to dominate the culture and civilization of the future, is rooted, as we have pointed out, in the so-called "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century, yet it is only within the last fifty years that it has burst into bloom, thus revealing its true nature to all. Today, however, it is so widely and so seriously questioned that we must go back to the first three centuries of the Christian era to discover a situation parallel to that which now confronts us. There were never lacking those who foresaw that the rejection of the Christian world of thought would issue in the rejection of the Christian ideal of conduct, and so

ultimately of the Christian type of culture and civilization. But most were apparently unaware that the foundations were being undermined, and no doubt the fact that the Christian ideal of conduct was not openly attacked acted as a barrage that kept them from seeing the full significance of the attack that was being prepared. Today, however, we do not need to be gifted with special foresight to perceive what confronts us. We are already experiencing it. The storm clouds that have been hovering on the horizon have assumed a threatening aspect, nay more, they have already begun to hurl their thunderbolts and to cast not only rain but hail upon the earth. No longer can we conceal from ourselves the fact that our Christian culture and civilization is imperilled, that the Christian world is face to face with a situation that has not been paralleled since the third century, and that the issue of issues is whether Christianity is to be relegated to one side and a non-Christian conception of thought and life shape the culture and civilization of the future. In the battle for and against the supernaturalism of Christianity, therefore, everything is at stake. Christianity desupernaturalized is Christianity extinct not only as a creed but as a way of life. Either this supernatural must be maintained or we must look forward to the day when Christianity will be "without name or remainder on the earth."

Before concluding permit us to indicate, in part at least, what in our judgment, the situation calls for on the part of those who rejoice in the Christian heritage and who would maintain it for themselves and their children—yea for the whole world.

In the first place there should be a clear recognition of the nature of the situation. Nothing is gained by concealing from ourselves, or by seeking to conceal from others, the fact that the attack being made on Christianity today is not aimed at individual facts or doctrines or precepts but at the Christian system as a whole considered both as a creed and a way of life. It is useless to try to placate the enemy by

yielding an outpost here and there. The central citadel itself is being attacked and its unconditional surrender demanded. What we are witnessing today is two life and world systems struggling together in mortal combat. The most fundamental difference between these two systems has to do with the supernatural. Modernism is resolutely bent on explaining the whole world, including man and religion and morality, without any recognition of the supernatural. On the other hand the supernatural so enters into the very substance of Christianity both as a system of thought and a way of life that Christianity desupernaturalized is Christianity extinct. It is especially important, in this connection, that we conceal neither from ourselves nor from others the fact that there is a radical difference between the ethics of Christianity and the ethics of naturalism. Professor McGiffert is responsible for the statement that "there was comparatively little difference between the ethical principles of the Christians and the principles of the best men of the pagan world."<sup>7</sup> Such a statement is blind and misleading. As a matter of fact the ethics of Christianity are radically different from those of paganism. Moreover Christianity has everything to gain and nothing to lose by frankly confessing the supernatural basis of its moral ideal. We only deceive ourselves if we suppose that Christian ideals of conduct with the supernatural left out will prove attractive to mankind. The day for that is past. The words with which Thornton closes his discussion of *Conduct and the Supernatural* could profitably be committed to memory by every Christian teacher: "The whole strength of the Christian position lies, not in repudiating those features in it which are most unlike the temper of the world, but in emphasizing them. If the Christian ethic were of this world and like unto it, there would be nothing more to be said. Its distinctive character is its very otherworldliness. For Christianity, so far from being a system or a code, is the manifestation in the world of a life which draws all its power

<sup>7</sup> *The Apostolic Age*, p. 506.

from a supernatural experience—an experience which in its turn is based upon a supernatural creed.”

In the second place there should be a clear recognition that, in a profound sense, the struggle in which we are engaged is an intellectual struggle. In view of that naturalism of thought and sentiment so characteristic of the present age, which threatens the elimination of Christianity both as a creed and a life, the differences that separate the various evangelical churches—in a sense even the differences that separate Protestants and Roman Catholics—seem comparatively trivial. The situation therefore calls loudly to the various branches of the Christian faith to unite their forces for the struggle against naturalism whether in its more materialistic or its more pantheistic forms. And yet fully as we believe that the divisions of Christianity are one of its chief weaknesses as over against encroaching modernism, we are far from supposing that the one desideratum is the erasing of denominational lines and the formation of one great church organization. That were to overlook the intellectual nature of the conflict. We are the advocates of a Christian morality and culture and civilization because we believe Christianity to be true. Others are the advocates of a different morality and culture and civilization because they believe Christianity to be false. The fundamental reason for the present-day defection from Christianity is that on more or less solid grounds men have been led to believe that Christianity is not true. We must at least have a religion we can believe to be true. It is a fatal mistake to admit, as some of our would-be advisers urge us to do, that Christian conceptions are subjective merely and incapable of being validated in the forum of reason. If Christianity is to shape the future we must be able to maintain, as all the great heroes of faith have maintained, that the Christian is the only true rationalist and that all that Christianity asks for from a purely intellectual standpoint is a fair hearing and a just verdict. The court of reason is at least the court of original jurisdiction. If non-suited before this court it

will be denied a hearing in every appellate court. Christianity will soon cease to move our hearts and guide our hands when it is no longer approved by our heads. The task of convincing the present age that many have been overhasty in concluding that Christianity is not true, and that as a matter of fact the Christian is the only one against whom the charge of irrationality may not be brought, may therefore not be shirked. It is true that rational assent does not make a Christian, but no one who withholds rational assent will become a Christian. Christianity claims to be a revelation of the truth and to teach the truth, and it is futile to suppose that we can advance its interests while we ignore this fact. A closer coördination of the forces of Christianity is much to be desired. And yet if such a coördination should be brought about at the cost of loyalty to truth our last state would be worse than our first. Such a force would be little more than a mob and utterly unable to defend itself against the intelligently conceived and scientifically applied attacks of modern naturalism. Let us seek a closer union of the forces of Christendom, but let us not suppose that Christianity can get along without a life and world view of its own. If we are even to defend our own camp, still more if we are to conquer the enemies' territory, we must face the consistent and scientifically conceived naturalism of today—within as well as without the Church—by a consistent and scientifically conceived Christian supernaturalism. An eclectic, half-way system will not suffice. Ultimately the victory will rest with an out-and-out naturalism or an out-and-out Christianity. As Abraham Kuyper<sup>8</sup> said more than twenty years ago in words that are even more significant today than when spoken: "As truly as every plant has a root, so truly does a principle hide under every manifestation of life. These principles are interconnected and have their common root in a fundamental principle; and from the latter is developed, logically and systematically, the whole complex of ruling

<sup>8</sup> *Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 260.

ideas and conceptions that go to make up our life and world view. With such a coherent world and life view, firmly resting on its principle and self-consistent in its splendid structure, Modernism now confronts Christianity; and against this deadly danger you Christians cannot successfully defend your Sanctuary but by placing, in opposition to all this, a life and world view of your own, founded as firmly on the base of your own principle, wrought out with the same clearness and glittering in an equally logical consistency."

In the third place we need to realize for our heartening in the strife that though it has to do with a fundamentally intellectual struggle between opposed conceptions of life, based on opposed conceptions of God, man, and the world, yet it is not simply a struggle for the mastery between two life and world views. If that were the whole of it we would have small confidence in the ultimate triumph of the Christian view. This is not to admit that the Christian occupies the less defensible position. This statement finds its explanation in the fact that Christianity must make its appeal to sinners, to those who are prejudiced against it both as a system of thought and a way of life, and that here to a marked degree the proverb holds good that "men convinced against their will remain of the same opinion still." Hence if Christianity were but one system of thought and life struggling with other systems for the suffrage and support of men we would despair of its ever receiving even a majority vote. We need to keep clearly in mind, therefore, that while Christianity is a specific system of thought and life yet it is at the same time infinitely more than this. The Christ who stands at its center, and makes it what it is, is infinitely more than a teacher and an example. He is also the Saviour of the world and the Lord and Life of humanity. He is not merely one who was; He is one who is; and through all the world's changes He remains the same, yesterday, today, and forever. As truly as in Apostolic days it is the Lord who adds unto the Church those who are

being saved. It is not merely with men, it is with the Lord Jesus Christ that we have to reckon. Jesus Christ being what He is, we are persuaded that the system of thought and life that centers in Him shall yet, despite all opposition, make its way to victory. We do not pretend to say what the more immediate future has in store for Christians. It may be that the Church is facing persecutions worse than those of the early centuries. It may be that the love of many will wax cold. But of this we are sure, Jesus being what He is, the living and reigning Lord, He will make His cause to triumph ultimately. In the future as in the past those who seek to stay the progress of the once crucified but now reigning Christ shall be constrained to make their own the words ascribed to Julian and exclaim "O Galilean! Thou hast conquered!" Here is our ultimate confidence that Christianity will never be a dead religion and that the culture and civilization of the future will be fundamentally Christian. It is not surprising that the enemies of Christianity, in view of the strongholds that have capitulated, many of them almost without a struggle, should already be regarding Christianity as a vanished enemy, and be looking forward to a culture and civilization in which the institutions of family and society and state will rest on other than Christian principles and in which the morals and habits of men will be pervaded by other than the Christian spirit. We are confident, however, that in this they resemble the South after the battle of Bull Run and Germany during the early part of the Great War. They do not reckon with Jesus as Lord and King. Did they not underestimate our great Leader they would not suppose that Christianity's resources are exhausted. In proportion as we appreciate Him aright, will we be confident that Christianity's resources have been little more than tapped, and that, despite widespread desertion and rebellion, it will make good its right to determine and shape the culture and civilization of the future.

The fact that our ultimate confidence is in Christ operat-



ing through the Holy Spirit has led some to minimize the intellectual nature of the conflict. Such hold Apologetics in slight esteem. Because the presentation of evidence will never of itself make a Christian, they are disposed to think it a matter of small moment whether the evidences are presented at all. It is true that only the Holy Spirit can make a Christian, but it is not a blind, ungrounded faith that the Holy Spirit works in men. The presentation of the evidences is, therefore, ordinarily, a necessary stage in the process of making a man a Christian. The qualification contained in the word "ordinarily" is demanded so as to leave room for the fact that the Holy Spirit "worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth." It is true that it is not he that planteth, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. That is not to say, however, that it is a matter of small moment whether Paul plants and Apollos waters. Granted that apart from the Lord there would be no saved added to the Church, it is still true that there is an indispensable need of Apologetics. Apologetes are among the more important of the instruments the Lord uses in the conversion of souls. Confess as heartily as we may our dependence upon the Lord in our efforts to Christianize the world, it still becomes us to say with Dr. Warfield that the part that Apologetics has to play is not a small part, rather a primary part and a conquering part. "It is the distinction of Christianity that it has come into the world clothed with the mission to *reason* its way to its dominion. Other religions may appeal to the sword, or seek some other way to propagate themselves. Christianity makes its appeal to right reason, and stands out among all religions, therefore, as distinctively "the Apologetic religion." . . . Face to face with the tremendous energy of thought and the incredible fertility in assault which characterizes the world in its anti-Christian manifestation, Christianity finds its task in thinking itself thoroughly through, and in organizing, not its defence only, but also its attack. It stands

calmly over against the world with its credentials in its hands, and fears no contention of men.”<sup>9</sup>

Finally, we should remember not only that our help is in the Lord but that the lack of conspicuous intellectual gifts does not disqualify us from playing an effective part in the Christianizing of the world. We may agree with those who say that we are witnessing the greatest war of intellect since the birthday of the Nazarene without implying that only those well-equipped intellectually are qualified to “do their bit” in this war. In adding to the Church those who are being saved the Lord makes large use of intellectual athletes, but He makes an even larger use of moral and spiritual athletes. Intellectual training is an important qualification in this war, but moral and spiritual training is even more important. It is highly significant that immediately preceding the affirmation in the Acts of the Apostles that “the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved,” we find a paragraph indicating the kind of people the early disciples were. There is a vital connection between the fact that the early disciples were the kind of people described in the closing verses of the second chapter of The Acts and the fact that daily there were added to the Church those who were being saved. What was true then is true now. If Christianity is winning comparatively few adherents from the world, a large part of the explanation is found in the sort of lives many professed Christians are living. We say that truth is powerful and that it must prevail. That is only a half truth. It becomes powerful only when it “glows in human hearts, burns on human tongues, and shines in human lives.” Christianity has always won adherents from the world in proportion as its ideal of character and conduct has found expression in human lives. The most powerful of the evidences for Christianity in its influence on the world has been the life of the true Christian. It is in these living epistles that is found the argument that no man can answer, and, what is even

<sup>9</sup> Introduction to *Fundamental Apologetics*, by F. R. Beattie, p. 26.

more significant, that no can can altogether resist. Men may persuade themselves that they have given a naturalistic explanation of the Christian creed, but that will afford them no resting place for their souls unless they can also persuade themselves that they can give a naturalistic explanation of the Christian life. As long as men and women live lives that demand the Christian creed as their only adequate explanation, the issue for or against Christ will perforce be a live issue. Nothing is more needed to meet the need of the times in which we live than a fresh determination on the part of Christians to live lives worthy of their profession. The apologetic value of such lives is incalculable simply because "the argument of a consistent and beautiful life is unanswerable." It is important that we do not obliterate the intellectual boundary lines between Christianity and Naturalism; but it is no less important that we do not obliterate the ethical boundary lines between Christianity and the World. To naturalize the supernaturalism of Christianity and to secularize its ethic are equally fatal. Moreover, in the long run, to do the one is to do the other. We must maintain the supernaturalism of Christianity if we would maintain the Christian ethic. Give up the supernaturalism of Christianity and it is useless to try to maintain the Christian ethic. The plant on which it grows has been cut at the root; and water and fertilize it as we may, it will inevitably die. The widespread repudiation of the Christian ideal of conduct, current in many circles, is the living proof of it.

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