

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



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

SAMUEL G. CRAIG, Editor

H. McALLISTER GRIFFITHS, Managing Editor

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

MID-DECEMBER, 1930
Vol. 1 No. 8

\$1.00 A YEAR
EVERYWHERE

The Central Significance of Christmas

CHRISTMAS commemorates the birth of a great man who spent His life doing good. It commemorates that but at the same time it commemorates so much more that we need to be on our guard lest we forget that it really does do that. This greater thing that it commemorates is the advent, the entering into the sphere of human life of the SON of God.

Those who deny that the BABE of BETHLEHEM was born of a Virgin and who maintain that the possibilities that slumbered in MARY'S SON were the result of a favorable heredity, in fact all but the few misguided individuals who think of JESUS as a legendary being, speak of the birth of CHRIST and with few exceptions regard Him as the greatest and best of those born of women. There are an increasing number today, however, who cannot bring themselves to speak of an advent of CHRIST; and that because such a mode of speech implies that He had existed previous to His birth in Bethlehem of Judea and that for the accomplishment of a definite purpose He had left that glory that He had had with the Father before the world was and entered into the conditions of earth. Unless we see in JESUS not only a man but the GOD-MAN it is hardly likely that we will think of Christmas as commemorating His advent.

No doubt it is possible to be so taken up with the divine in JESUS as to lead us to forget His humanity, the fact that He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. There is little danger of our falling into that error today, however. The

danger is rather that enamored of His humanity we will be forgetful of His divinity. Be this as it may those of us who regard Him as infinitely more than a man yield to others in no respect in our confession of His humanity. There is no hesitation at all on our part when we say that in all that goes to make a man, whether as regards his body or his soul, JESUS was and is a man. None the less Christmas commemorates not so much the birth of the best and most beloved of the sons of men as a "momentous event in the eternal life of God: a manifestation, a forth-coming, a mission, a redemptive movement, a visitation, a great descent."

The presence of a GOD-MAN in this world calls loudly and insistently for explanation—and that whether we consider this more than extraordinary, this supernatural being from an intellectual or from an ethical viewpoint.

From an intellectual viewpoint a diffi-

culty is raised by the fact that the presence of the GOD-MAN in this world involved a break in the order of nature, a miracle in the strict sense of the word. We live in an ordered world, a casually connected world; and yet on the assumption that JESUS was a GOD-MAN it is certain that the causes ordinarily operating in this world cannot account for Him. From a more ethical viewpoint, a difficulty is raised by the presence of one who was holy, harmless and undefiled in a world filled with sin and shame, in a world reeking with iniquity and blasphemy—and that as a result of His own choice. The ethical problem raised is similar to that which would be raised by the discovery of one distinguished for purity and good works in a night-club of the fastest sort. But whether we be concerned over the intellectual or the ethical difficulty, or both, that is raised by the presence of the GOD-MAN in this world of ours, the needed explanation for all those who have eyes to see is given in that "Faithful Saying" by which the early Christian community expressed its practical belief in the Advent of our LORD: "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." If sin had not entered this world, JESUS would never have come; but sin being here as an awful reality, His coming was necessary if men were to be saved, if a fallen race was to be restored to its GOD. JESUS did not come into this world because He was attracted by the ways of sinful men. Far from it. Sin was the one thing that He hated with perfect hatred. He was here on an errand of mercy. It was His love

IN THIS ISSUE:

What Shall We Do With Christianity?	4
William Bittle Wells	
The Eternal Child.....	6
Clarence Edward Macartney	
Three Tributes to Dr. Wilson.....	8
Books of Religious Significance.....	10
Letters to the Editor.....	13
Questions Relative to Christian Faith and Practice.....	14
Current Views and Voices.....	15
News of the Church.....	17

but who do not believe in miracles. The idea that even a God could do anything contrary to what they understand as "Nature's Laws" is abhorrent to them. But what kind of a God would it be who would be unable to suspend a law that He had created?

What is a God?

Webster says that a God is a "Being conceived as of possessing *supernatural* power . . . the Supreme Being; the Eternal and Infinite Spirit." Therefore, to say that we believe in God, but we do not believe in miracles is a contradiction of terms. It is impossible to hold to the one, and not to hold to the other. Therefore, again, the rejection of the miracles in the New Testament means not only the rejection of the authenticity of the record, but, what is more vital, if possible, the rejection of the divinity of Jesus, and throwing overboard the whole idea of Christianity. This must be the inevitable conclusion because Christ's entire ministry, and consequently, Christianity, were founded upon miracles.

"Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.'

"And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, 'I will; be thou clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." (Matthew 8:2-3.)

"Jesus said unto the Centurion, 'Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.' And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." (Matthew viii; 13.)

"Behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped Him, saying, 'My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.' Jesus rose

and followed him, and so did His disciples, and behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself, 'If I may touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole;' and when He saw her, He said, 'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.' And the woman was made whole from that hour.

"And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, 'Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all the land." (Matthew 19:18-26.)

"And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matthew 15:30-31.)

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and they awoke Him, and say unto Him, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:37-39.)

"About the fourth watch of the night, He cometh upon them, *walking upon the sea,*

and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out. For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.' And He went unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased; and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracles of the loaves; for their heart was hardened." (Mark 6:48-52.)

The four gospels are thus replete with miracles which Jesus performed. We cannot question the genuineness of these miracles without questioning the validity of the Scriptures in every respect. It is again a question of fact: do the Scriptures lie in this respect, or do they tell the truth? If they do not lie, granting that the writers were honest and sincere, were the men deceived and was Jesus deceived? The answer to this is that no man can read the account of the miracles without being impressed that the truth is being told. It seems to be inherent in these statements about Jesus. They have the ring of absolute sincerity. No fact in history is better attested than are the miracles of Jesus.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and said, "Rabbi, we *know* that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:1-2.) Peter emphasized the same point: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." (Acts 2:22.)

(Concluded in our next issue)

The Eternal Child

A Christmas Sermon by

The Rev. Clarence Edward Macartney, D.D.,
Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; . . . That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."—Luke 2:34, 35.

I HAVE never read any comment on it, but I take it for granted that Raphael's great painting of Jesus and His mother in the Dresden gallery is an attempt to describe the thoughts and emotions of the mother and her child at the presentation in the temple. Mary, listening to the words of Simeon, presents and yet holds back her child, and her unfocused eye seems to be

filled with wonder and awe as she sees far in the distance the strange destiny of the child who rests in her arms.

Simeon, a just man and devout and who waited for the consolation of Israel, and to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, had come by the Spirit into the temple when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to present Him. By a revelation he knew that this child was the Lord's Christ, and taking Him up in his arms, he blessed Him. If we had the gift of Simeon, and when mothers and fathers

bring their child here to the church to be baptized, we could cast the horoscope of the child and speak its destiny, the mother's face would be filled with wonder and awe, perhaps also with dread. As she contemplated the path of hardship, of sorrow, and of pain which her child was to tread; or the career of honor and of fame which he was to accomplish; the days of loneliness, the hours of anguish, perhaps also deeds of dishonor and of shame—no doubt, it is just as well that the future is veiled and that no Simeon can stand in our midst and sketch the future of the child as he did the future

of the divine child who lay in Mary's arms. Yet every life is full of wonder, of mystery, of awe, and what the people said when they were amazed at the circumstances of the birth of John the Baptist, we can all say when we look into the face of a child, what manner of child shall this be?

When he took the child in his arms, the devout Simeon blessed Joseph and His mother, and spoke unto Mary His mother. If a little before, St. Luke says that the parents brought in the child Jesus, as if Joseph were just as much a parent of the child as Mary, let it be noted how carefully he is to say here that it was to Mary His mother that Simeon addressed himself when he declared the destiny of the child. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." In this statement of the destiny of Jesus, there are three things said of Him—all of them strikingly illustrated and fulfilled in the life of Jesus, in the history of His Church ever since, and in the lives and hearts of men today. First, that Christ is to men either a blessing or a condemnation. Second, that His presence, His truth, His Church, will ever create opposition. And third, that Christ Himself is the revealer of the thoughts of the heart, the supreme touchstone of human nature.

I. Christ is either a Blessing or a Condemnation; He is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Christ either condemns men or justifies them and saves them. In Him, men are saved or lost. He is a stone of stumbling upon which men fall, or a rock by which they rise unto life eternal.

When Simeon, inspired by the Holy Ghost, said that Christ is set or appointed, established for the falling and rising again of many in Israel, what he means is not that Christ is sent by God to make men stumble and fall, but that stumbling and rising again will ever be the effect of His person and His truth as men encounter Him upon the pathway of life. In Christ there is no neutrality. Men are either for Him or against Him. They rise through Him, or because of Him they fall.

We know how true this was during Christ's life upon earth. There were many who were offended in Him; many who stumbled and fell—the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, Judas—all of these men fell, whereas others rose. Many who stood high fell; many who were poor and humble were exalted. To some His person and His doctrines present insuperable difficulty and make demands which only serve to arouse the bitter antagonism of the heart, and the very righteousness of these demands, the reason-

ableness of them only the more arouses the antagonism of human nature.

This is why it is a solemn and searching thing to be confronted with Christ, in the Scriptures, in the proclamation of the Church, in the lives of His followers. To have a duty presented to us and then refuse it; to have a higher path opened for us and decline it; to have a sin revealed to us, and refuse to leave it or mourn over it—this is to stumble, and to fall. But to obey, to change our life, to repent, to believe—this is to rise to new levels of character.

It has become sort of a fashion today to eulogize doubt, and praise doubters as superior minds, and presumably superior characters. It is worthwhile remembering, therefore, that we have nothing of this in Christ, or in the Scriptures, and that Christ makes it clear that the different attitudes of men towards Him is to be accounted for by a difference in their hearts. He told them plainly that the reason they did not believe in Him and love Him was because the love of the Father was not in their hearts. They were not of the truth, therefore, they would not come unto Him. In the great doctrines of the Christian faith, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the present intercession of the Son of God and His Second Coming to judge men and angels—in these doctrines some find only an occasion for scorn and angry rejection, and others treat them as impossible and old-wives tales; while others again rise upon these granite foundations of faith to holiness of life and fellowship with God. They find them to be not a stumbling block as some do, or foolishness as others do, but the power of God and the wisdom of God. How shall we account for this difference, this contrasting reaction to Christ and His Gospel? Not in environment; not in training; not in education, or heredity—for those who have had the same training, environment, heredity and education immediately part company in the presence of Christ. Some stumbling upon Him and falling, others rising through faith and obedience to nobility and beauty of life. "The reason," Christ says, "is a difference in life."

The last scene in the earthly life of Christ is a tragic demonstration of the way in which Christ divides among men. It was a prefiguration, too, of His influence upon human nature through all the ages. There He hung between the two thieves, one of whom reviled Him and cursed Him and mocked, while the other said, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." So Christ is set for the falling and rising again of many souls, so He divides between men. He is the savor of death unto death, or to others the savor of life unto life. It is this fact which gives an immense earnestness and solemnity to the preaching of Christ and His Gospel. No one can hear it

without being made thereby either better or worse. It is the proclamation of life eternal to them that believe; the proclamation of death to them that reject Him.

II. Christ will always be opposed in the World. "Behold this child is set for a sign which shall be spoken against." The angels when they announced the birth of Christ had foretold only His glory and His triumph. It remained for the devout Simeon to tell the plain truth that Christ who had come in the beauty of holiness and innocence, the incarnation of divine love and pity and compassion would be encompassed by hatred and enemies at every step in His earthly career until at length the storm of human passion and anger broke over His head upon the cross.

There are many scenes in the history of the human race which are of a nature to undeceive those who will know nothing of human nature but its original goodness and excellence. But the one chapter in the history of humanity which forever refutes such a definition of human nature is that chapter which relates for us the life and the death of Jesus Christ. In that chapter we learn what human nature is and to what length it will go. This child is set for a sign which shall be spoken against. When I recall that some said He had a devil, others that He was mad—that men took up stones to stone Him, that they tried to throw Him over a precipice, that they betrayed Him and mocked Him and spat upon Him and crowned Him with thorns, crucified Him, and reflect that I share the same nature as those men, then I come to understand how far the heart can go in its rebellion against God.

In how striking a manner, the prediction of Simeon has been fulfilled. Wherever Christ, His cause, His Church, His Gospel, His doctrines, His true disciples are, there Christ will be spoken against. Wherever He is not spoken against, wherever His Gospel is not rejected and scorned, but received with polite courtesy or dismissed with cool indifference, there you can be sure that it is not Christ who is preached, and that what appears to be the Gospel is another Gospel which is not another. The real Christ, the real Gospel will always be a sign to be spoken against.

It is possible so to preach Christ that He shall not be spoken against. You can leave out His awful claims to pre-existence, deity, world dominion and judgment, you can omit His stern demands upon believers; you can be silent as to the solitary and exclusive way of righteousness and salvation, by faith in Him alone—all these things which are repugnant to the natural mind and heart of man—you can leave out, but only to discover that Christ so preached is not a sign to be spoken against. St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians how men urged him to tone down a little the terms

of redemption, to persuade him to say that although men were saved by Christ, it was also necessary for them to observe certain Jewish laws and rites. But, he said, that if he should do that, then would the offense of the Gospel cease. But what he declared to be the offense of the Gospel, that the sinner is saved only by his faith in Christ that to Paul was the power of the Gospel, the Gospel of which he was not ashamed, the Gospel in which he gloried—nothing less than this seems now to be the question before the Church of Christ. Shall the Gospel, a stone of stumbling or a rock of rising, a sign to be spoken against or a truth to be embraced with rapture, love and joy, shall it cease to be the Gospel, good news, and become merely good advice, meditation, observation, warning?

III. Christ is the touchstone of human hearts. Behold this Child that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. The one great purpose of our earthly probation is that God might know our hearts. Not that in His omniscience, He cannot know and see what is in the heart now, or what the heart will do in the years to come, but rather that by the experiences of life, by the use or abuse of its opportunities and its dispensations, every man should write a description of his character. This, we are told was His purpose in His dealings with Israel. Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee. These forty years in the wilderness that He might humble thee to prove thee, to know what is thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or not. The life of the heart is the critical thing. Out of the heart are the issues of life, not what goes into a man, but what comes out of his heart defileth him. If men do not love Christ it is because the love of God is not in their hearts. With the heart, man believeth unto life. It is therefore in harmony with this great fact of life that Christ is declared to be the One who above all others tests the heart and reveals its secrets and its thoughts.

We can see how true this was during the life of Christ upon earth. There was something in Him and in His truth which awakened latent evil and latent good. The scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, Judas, brought before Christ, revealed themselves, their anger, hypocrisy, blasphemy, bitterness, enmity to good, their hatred and their treason. While others brought before Christ had discovered in themselves the things which God delights to find. Mary, her gratitude; the publican, his penitence; the Magdalene, her love; the centurion, his great faith; the thief, the penitent and his hope. So Christ has ever been revealing, uncovering, discovering what is in the heart. The same sun which shines upon the earth today ripens the good seed, the wheat, and also the tares. The same sun which scatters the darkness, dissipates

the clouds, also draws out of the earth its noxious mists and vapors. So Christ acts upon the hearts of men.

In Christ, the one great decisive, searching thing is His remedy for sin. Forgiveness through faith; cleansing through His blood. How that test at once reveals, searches a man's heart. When we say that He searches the heart of man, reveals its secrets thoughts, we do not mean that in one man He discovers only that which is unworthy, and in another only that which is worthy. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. But that in one, He discovers a refusal of God's will and plan, and in the other a humble and grateful acceptance of it. In one, self-righteousness; in the other, the publican's cry—"God be merciful to me, a sinner." Let the cross be plunged down today into your heart

—what is the reaction to it? Men speak of salvation by character. Yes, if by that you mean the Gospel standards of character, the Gospel's method of ascertaining the true character of a man's heart. For the supreme test of character is the offer of Christ crucified, the acceptance or the rejection of that shows the moral drift of a man's nature and nothing that he can say or do, good or bad, is of the least significance as compared with that acceptance or that rejection.

When Sir Walter Raleigh was led to the block his executioner asked him if his head lay right. Raleigh answered, "It matters little, my friend, how the head lies, provided the heart is right." Here in the presence of God, here before Him to whom are revealed the secrets of all hearts, here before the cross of mercy and of love, what does your heart speak, how does your heart lie?

Three Tributes to Dr. Wilson

AMONG the many tributes to the life and work of the late Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, the three following are typical. Two are selected from Church Bulletins. The first is from the pen of the Rev. H. H. McQuilkin, D.D., minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Orange, N. J. The second is from the bulletin of the Benedict Memorial Presbyterian Church of New Haven, Conn., and was written by the Rev. L. Craig Long, the minister of that Church. The third is from a leaflet recently issued by Westminster Seminary.

"A Wise Masterbuilder"

WESTMINSTER Theological Seminary in Philadelphia has sustained an irreparable loss in the death of this great scholar, inspiring teacher, stalwart defender of the faith. He was master of more than 30 languages and always carried on his investigations in the original tongues—a thing that scholars like even Prof. Driver of Oxford could not do.

"For fifty years he had ferretted out every fact that has any bearing on the Old Testament Scriptures. Toilfully, open-mindedly, eagerly he ransacked the treasures of knowledge. The results of his search brought assurance that the Christian has a sure foundation for his faith in the Sacred Word.

"He taught first in the Western Theological Seminary at Pittsburgh, where the writer was one of his 'boys,' as he always called his former students. Then for thirty years he shed the light of his brilliant attainments on Princeton Theological Seminary. When the control of Princeton was shifted, he, knowing intimately all the inside

workings of the matter, was constrained by his conscience and convictions, and at great sacrifice materially, to withdraw and take the lead in founding Westminster. His family testify that his year in the new institution was the happiest of his life. Here as a wise masterbuilder, he laid the foundation of a theological school that is destined to strengthen and enrich the entire Protestant body with its positive, emphatic, triumphant testimony to the faith of the Reformers.

"His name will forever remain entwined with Westminster's. From her portals he went home to God. The splendor of his fame and faith will linger with the faculty and students of Westminster like some superb sunset against the sky, and will surely raise up men and women of faith throughout the Church to aid in maintaining and expanding the work he loved so well."

One Who Fought the Good Fight

MANY hearts have been filled with sorrow during the past week because God has called Home, one of His faithful servants. Those who shall miss him are those who have loved him, and who have looked to him for more than fifty years, as one who has been able to build up intelligent faith in those who studied in his classes, in the accuracy and infallibility of the Old Testament. Dr. Wilson began his theological study more than fifty years ago, and has held professorships in three Seminaries: Western, Princeton, and finally Westminster. As a student, he realized the great need for a type of Biblical scholarship which would be objective and thorough in dealing with facts that could be known only by