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EDITORIAL

THE other morning one of the most brilliant of my college classmates stopped me with the remark, "I have just been talking to a teamster about his relationship to Christ. But the man seemed satisfied with his own good deeds and present condition." If those are not his exact words, they convey his thought. The teamster's condition was, indeed, one of true tragedy, but the particular thing worthy of note is that my classmate had caught God's point of view as to the value of a human soul. He was just as interested in talking to a teamster about his soul as to a fellow-student. Have we unconsciously allowed ourselves to be warped by social custom or habit out of the line of God's thinking? Let us check ourselves up *now*. "But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin." (James 2:9.)

Are your arsenals well stored with weapons? The most powerful weapon is, without question, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17.) A generous provision along this line in your mental arsenal will be blessed of God, if you permit it, toward bringing to pass in your life the glorious situation described in Philippians 4:7, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

But it is not for defense only that your weapons are to be kept polished and prepared. The Lord's imperative "Go ye" demands offense from every Christian, no matter what his situation and location. Next to the word of God itself, some of the most powerful weapons are books written by men of God. Have you on your shelves, ready to loan to inquiring student friends, a few of the classics of the present conflict for the faith? One such is Professor J. Gresham Machen's "Christianity and Liberalism." The present inexpensive edition (Macmillan, \$1) makes it possible for practically every one to have at least one copy at hand. Will you make it possible for someone to thank God for you by loaning to him or her a copy of this book which makes crystal clear the difference between the two chief faiths professed by the students of North America today, Christianity on the one hand, and Modernism (which is not Christianity at all) on the other?

Men are bound to judge any system of teaching or belief, to some extent at least, by its practical results. The question arises, "Is Modernism fruit-

IS THE BIBLE RIGHT ABOUT JESUS?

I. WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT JESUS*

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

THE subject which I have been bold enough to propose for the three addresses which I shall have the privilege of attempting to deliver is this: "Is the Bible Right about Jesus?" And, after all, that is the real test of the authority of the Bible. If the Bible is really right about Jesus, the probability is that it is right about other things as well. But before we discuss that question it does seem to me to be important to discuss what the Bible teaches about Jesus. If you are going to determine whether the Bible is *right* in what it says, it does seem to be important that you should first ask yourself *what* it says. In other words, I am old-fashioned enough—I know it is quite out of date—to think that it is important to examine a thing before you begin to express an estimate or criticism of it. So it does seem to me that we should first ask ourselves what the Bible teaches about Jesus before we ask ourselves whether that which the Bible teaches is true or false.

In the prologue to the Third Gospel we have words which, literally translated, are approximately as follows: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narration concerning those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them over to us, it has seemed best to me also, having followed from the beginning all things accurately, to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, in order that thou mightest know, concerning the things in which thou hast been instructed, the certainty."

It is a very wonderful sentence from the point of view of style; the sense is held in abeyance until the very end; it is like a wave gradually forming on the shore until it reaches its climax in those words "the certainty." The man who wrote that sentence was a man gifted from the point of view of style, especially when we observe in the passage that follows, where he was dealing with the delicate details of Palestinian life, that he did not there attempt a classical Greek style, but was possessed of taste enough to catch the wonderful spirit of those Semitic narratives which came to him upon Palestinian ground.

But more interesting than the style of the passage is its content. I do not know that there is any passage in the whole of the Scriptures which needs to be taken to heart more earnestly just now than these words. That Theophilus, to whom the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts are dedicated, was probably an immature Christian: one at least who needed intellectual

* This is the first of a series of three addresses, given in King's Hall, London, on June 10, 1927, under the auspices of The Bible League of Great Britain. It has been revised by the author for *The Evangelical Student*, and is printed by his kind permission and that of The Bible League. It is planned to publish the second and third addresses on this same general subject in the next succeeding issues.

guidance; in whose case intellectual difficulties needed attention. It is very interesting to learn how the author of a very large portion of the whole New Testament deals with the intellectual needs of such a man. In the first place, there is no evidence that the author treated of the doubts or difficulties that Theophilus may have had as being necessarily sinful. There, I think, he provides a lesson for us when we try to lead people today. But still more important is it to observe that he did not treat those intellectual questionings as though they were matter of no moment. He did not adopt the modern slogan that "it makes no difference"; that men can be equally close to Jesus no matter what they think of Jesus. But he plainly recognized what is recognized in the whole of the New Testament: that the Christian religion is founded squarely upon a body of facts. In other words, the method of this writer in dealing with intellectual difficulty is, first of all, to get the matter straight.

That is a method which has gone out of fashion at the present time. If there is one thing in the Church in America, and, if what I read is correct, also in the Church elsewhere in the world—if there is one thing that is characteristic of the Church of the present day, it is the alarming growth of plain stark ignorance. Suppose you are leading a Bible Class that is dealing with the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It may be well to begin with a little review. Suppose you say: "Now let us get this matter straight. Who was the first King of the united Israel?" There will perhaps be an eloquent silence for a little while, and then there will be various suggestions. Solomon, perhaps, will be a prominent candidate for the position. Finally, a grey-haired gentleman, the oldest member of the congregation, product of a better day in education, may suggest that it was Saul. You will say that that is correct, and that Saul did not exactly make a go of it. And then you will say that the next one was David, and the next Solomon, and then the kingdom was divided. Then you will go over it again: the first one was Saul, and then came David, and then Solomon, and then the kingdom was divided. When you get through, they will come up and say: "We never heard anything like it." Try that method in teaching a class. You may make a great hit! It is an entirely new notion to some people just to get the Bible straight.

Now I had it fairly straight when I was very young, not by attendance upon any sort of school, not by the operation of elaborate schemes of pedagogy, but by half-an-hour with my mother on Sunday afternoons at home. I could tell you the kings of Israel and Judah in order. The kings of Israel are easy, because they were all bad. But I could tell you just which ones of the kings of Judah were good and which bad, at a very tender age. But, it may be asked, what is the use of it? What is the use of learning all those mere details? There is a great deal of use of it, I think. For if you get the notion that there was a true progress of history in Old Testament times, then you come to have a certain conviction that is entirely absent from the minds of many persons who try to be good Christians at the present day—the conviction that when our Lord Jesus came into this

world for our salvation, He came at a definite point of time, and that if we had been living there we could have seen Him; that like the author of the Fourth Gospel we could have touched Him with our hands, seen Him with our eyes, and heard Him with our ears. In other words, you have formed the fundamental conviction that, unlike other religions, the Christian religion is founded squarely upon a body of historical fact. Very well, it is rather important, I think, for us to try to get straight in our minds what the Bible says about Jesus.

But it is quite impossible to understand what the Bible says about Jesus unless you know also some of the things that the Bible says about other matters as well; and so if you will begin to read your Bible, you will find at least two important things in the Old Testament. At the very beginning, of course, you find the doctrine of Creation, that doctrine that is so much despised today: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." You have there a clear view of a personal God, the Creator and Ruler of the world. Unfortunately that view of a personal God is lost in large sections of the modern Church. Men say that the doctrine of creation is a matter of metaphysics without importance for the Christian. We cannot solve the problem, it is said, as to how the world came into being; those things do not belong to the sphere of religion at all. Our God, men say, is a God of love, and we are indifferent to the question whether there is a God of power. Well, of course, there are many objections to such a way of thinking. A God who is only a God of love and has no power to act is not a person; and a God who is not a person but merely an abstraction is not a God who can love us and whom we can love. But of course the Christian heart negates this lack of interest in the question of the Creator and Ruler of the world. As for us, we say still, as we contemplate the "woodlands robed in the blooming garb of spring," or dark mountains capped with dazzling white: "This is God's world; its majesty and its beauty came from Him."

One thing that is to be regretted in the religious life of the present day is the decline in natural religion. But as for me, I am bound to say that I will not yield to the pantheists in my sense of the friendliness of nature; and when I toil up upon one of our mountains in America—for there we have to pay for our view, we have not the bare mountains you have in Britain—when I toil up, and the trees, as I ascend, become smaller and smaller until the prospect bursts upon my view, as I am far away from the troubles of the valley below, sometimes I have a feeling of the friendliness of nature, the friendliness of nature as over against the hostility of man, which is somewhat in the spirit of the pantheists of all ages, except that in our case it is a far deeper thing; for as we come thus into contact with nature we can think of that holy and living Person who has provided its majesty and its beauty because of His love for us.

And then at the very beginning of the Bible you have also the other great presupposition of what the Bible tells us about Jesus—namely, the awful fact of sin. The consciousness of sin is deepened all through the

Old Testament; in the teachings of our Lord, too, and all through the New Testament. It is deepened by a proclamation of the law of God. The law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and unless by learning the lesson of the law we come to have the consciousness of sin, I fear we shall never come to Jesus as our Saviour.

On that point I desire not to be misunderstood. I do not mean for one moment that all Christian experience is alike. I do not mean that every one, when he comes to Christ, has to go through a prior period of agony of soul until he comes into the joy of acceptance of the gospel. I remember a very interesting meeting that I attended some years ago. It was a meeting of an evangelical type, an experience-meeting; and the persons who were there present were asked to say where they were born the first time, and when and where they were born the second time. One person said that he was born the first time in such and such a city, and that he was born the second time on a railway train at such and such a moment, of such and such an hour, and on such and such a day. It was a very interesting record of the truest Christian experience, and God forbid that we should say aught against it. But then one lady rose to her feet in a very modest way and said something to the effect that she was born the first time in such and such a place, and she could not tell when she was born the second time because she had grown up in a Christian home. I do not remember her exact words, but the notion was that as she had come to the consciousness of sin she had come also to the consciousness of Jesus as her Saviour. That was true Christian experience too, and we should never disparage it. My friends, do not misunderstand me. I do believe that there is a definite instant when the wonderful event occurs in the life of every one who becomes a Christian—the wonderful event when he or she is born again; but I do believe also that there are many who cannot tell when that instant was; it is known to God, but not to them. There are many Christians who cannot give the day and hour of their conversion, who do not pass through prior agonies of soul. Certainly such Christian experience is not at all inferior to the experience of those who could give the very day and hour of their conversion. Both kinds of Christian experience, it seems to me, are true forms of Christian experience; and God forbid that we should depreciate either one of them. But even in the case of those who grow up in Christian homes and are children of the Covenant from tender years, there is logically connected with their acceptance of Christ as Saviour, the consciousness of the fact that without Him they are lost in sin. So those are the two great presuppositions of the Christian message; the awful holiness, the awful transcendence of God, and the terrible separateness of sinful man from the Holy God.

Then, after the preparation for the coming of our Lord under the old dispensation, at last the fulness of the time had come. In what wondrous fashion the Saviour, according to the New Testament, came into this world! He who was so great did not despise the virgin's womb; He was content to be born as a man and to lie as a babe in a manger and to be subject to earthly parents. How wondrous the story is! How different

from anything that could have been expected, yet how full of a divine majesty!

In the New Testament there is the record of the life of our Lord upon this earth. And even in the days when He was on earth, He manifested His glory. The writers of the New Testament are conscious of the fact that even when our Lord was subject, in His human nature, for the most part to the petty limitations of human life, yet the glory of the incarnate Word shone forth. With what a trembling wonder the author of the Fourth Gospel says that "the Word became flesh . . . and *we beheld His glory*"!

At that point, of course—in our dependence upon the Bible for the facts with regard to Jesus—we meet the opposition of many modern men. A great many persons are telling us that we should emancipate ourselves from the slavish dependence upon a Book, and that our true authority is Christ alone. So they tell us that every race and every generation must interpret Christ for itself. We think, in this connection, for example, of that beautiful but harmful little book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, by E. Stanley Jones, where truth is mixed with error in such a way as to lead many astray. The notion seems to be that every race may interpret Christ for itself.

If that meant simply that every race has its contribution to make to the rich store of our understanding of what God has told us in His Word, then we could no doubt agree. If it meant that the Indian race could understand some aspects of what the Bible says better than other races, in order that when that race had seized some aspects of the truth about Jesus it might share that newly discovered truth with us—if that were what is meant we might agree. But I fear that something very different is meant, or, if not consciously meant, at least logically involved in what is said; I fear that what is involved is that the interpretation of Christ which every race attains is an interpretation that is valid for that race alone—as when it is often said, in accordance with the pragmatist scepticism of the day, that "Western creeds" must not be forced upon the "Eastern mind." When you arrive at that point—when you hold that every race may interpret Christ for itself—you are in great danger of substituting just the imagination of your own heart for contact with the real person, Jesus of Nazareth, whom God has presented to all nations in the whole of His Word, not only in the four Gospels, but also, just as truly, in the Epistles of Paul.

I do believe, indeed, with all my heart that there is a direct contact of the risen Christ with the human soul. But I also believe that if that were all, the whole coming of our Lord upon this earth would have been in vain, and that it is for us when we come into contact with Jesus not to despise the plain record of what He said and did.

There is the first aspect, then, of what the Bible tells us about Jesus. The Bible tells us what manner of person Jesus was and is, and the part of the Bible that tells us that is contained particularly in the four Gospels. But if that were all that we knew about Jesus, we should be of all men most miserable? If we knew only what sort of person Jesus was and is, we

should look with hopeless envy upon those who, when He was on earth, pushed in through the crowd where He sat amidst scribes and Pharisees, and had the wonderful experience of looking upon His face. We should be conscious, as we read about that experience, of a wealth of glory from which we should be for ever shut out. No, there is something else that we need to know about Jesus. We need to know what sort of person Jesus was and is, but we need also to know how we of the twentieth century can come into contact with Him. And surely that is not such a very simple thing. We cannot observe Him as we go through our busy streets. We are separated from Him by nineteen centuries. How is the wonder to be accomplished that we who live in the twentieth century should have personal contact with One who lived so long ago?

If you will read the religious writers of the present day, you will constantly observe that they assume it as an axiom that we ought to return to the experience of those who came into contact with our Lord in Galilee. I do not believe for one moment that they are right. In book after book, in sermon after sermon, it seems to be assumed that we ought to take the first disciples in Galilee as our models today. "They did not know anything about the Nicene and Chalcedonian doctrine of the person of our Lord," it is said in effect; "and so therefore these things are matter of indifference to us." Such is the argument. But do you not see that if we are to have contact with One who lived in the first century we must know far more about Him than was known by those who came into direct contact with Him when He was on earth? We need to know, for one thing, that He has risen from the dead, and that He is still alive; and then we need also to know how if He is still alive we can come into His presence.

There is where the other great division of what the New Testament says about Jesus Christ comes in; and that other great division is found especially in the Epistles of Paul. The Gospels tell us what manner of person Jesus was and is; and the Epistles tell us—what it is equally important for us to know—how *we* can come into contact with Him. Do not misunderstand me. The division is not an absolute one. The Epistles tell us not only how we can come into contact with Jesus, but also what sort of person He was and is; the great Christological passages in the Epistles enrich greatly and clarify our knowledge of the person of our Lord. And the Gospels, on the other hand, tell us not only what sort of person Jesus was, but also, by way of prophecy, how future generations could come into contact with Him. But, after all, it is not surprising that the full explanation of our Lord's redeeming work should be made known only after the redeeming work was done; and so I have little sympathy with those who regard the words of our Lord when He was on earth as somehow more necessary for our needs than the words of the Holy Spirit that are found, for example, in the Epistles of Paul. You could summarize what we need to know about Jesus by saying that we need to have first, the record of Jesus' life in the Gospels to tell us what sort of person Jesus is, and then we need to have the eighth chapter of Romans and the rest of the Epistles of Paul to tell us how it is that He can become our Saviour today.

What is it that our Lord did, not merely for the men of long ago but for us today? The answer of the whole New Testament, of the whole Bible indeed, is abundantly plain. For us He did more than heal our bodily infirmities. For us He died upon the Cross. There is the point of contact between Jesus and our souls. I do not think that what the New Testament says about the Cross of Christ is particularly intricate. It is, indeed, profound, but it can be put in simple language. We deserved eternal death; the Lord Jesus, because He loved us, died in our stead upon the Cross. It is a mystery, but it is not intricate. What is really intricate and subtle is the manifold modern attempt to get rid of the simple doctrine of the Cross of Christ in the interests of human pride. Of course there are objections to the Cross of Christ, and men in the pulpits of the present day pour out upon that blessed doctrine the vials of their scorn; but when a man has come under the consciousness of sin, then as he comes into the presence of the Cross, he says, with tears of gratitude and joy: "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

Men have objections in plenty. The Christian doctrine of the Cross, as it is found in the Bible, is objected to, in the first place, because it depends upon history. But of course it must depend upon history if it is to be a gospel; for "gospel" means "good news"; and news means an account of something that has happened. With regard to the same objection, we might say also that though this way of salvation begins in history it proceeds to present experience. When we have read the blessed record, we can take it to our souls and come into contact now with our risen Lord. Men exalt "experience" at the present day, and set it in opposition to the Word of God; but why do they not attend to that Christian experience which testifies that the Word of God is true?

Then men say, in the second place, that it is absurd that one man should die for another man's sins. Of course, it is absurd. Certainly one *man* cannot die for another man's sins; and the human analogies that have been proposed for the atonement made by Christ usually just show how totally unable the natural man is to understand the doctrine of the Cross. When men appeal to the sacrifice of individuals at the present time as though that were in any full sense analogous to the gift of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, they show that they have never come into any real contact with the Cross of Christ; for when a man comes into contact with the Cross, he is impressed, not with the similarity between that act of self-sacrifice and other acts of self-sacrifice, no matter how noble they may be, but he is impressed with the profound difference; and so he says:

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

Because one mere man cannot suffer for another man's sins, it does not follow that the Lord Jesus could not suffer for our sins. And that is why

we cling, with all our souls, to the Christian doctrine of the deity of our Lord; for if He be not God, then He cannot be our substitute.

But men say: "What a low view it is of the love of God if you represent an angry God as though He were waiting coldly for a sacrifice to be made!" It is really astonishing to me how preachers of the present day, who are able to read, who have some sort of contact with the Christian literature of all the centuries, should so misrepresent the Christian doctrine of the Cross. Of course I need not point out to you where the error lies. The very point of the Christian view of the Cross is that God does not wait for someone else to pay the price of sin, but in His infinite love has Himself paid the price of sin for us—God Himself in the person of the Son, who loved us and gave Himself for us; God Himself in the person of the Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

It is a strange thing that when men talk about the love of God they show by every word that they utter that they have no conception at all of the depths of God's love. If you want to find an instance of true gratitude for the infinite grace of God, do not go to those who think of God's love as something that costs nothing, but go rather to those who in agony of soul have faced the awful fact of the guilt of sin, and then have come to know with a trembling wonder that the miracle of all miracles has been accomplished, and that the eternal Son has died in their stead.

Thus if we put what the Bible says about Jesus together, we can even now have contact with Him. I am bound to say that there was a time when I was greatly troubled in my faith by the defection of the modern world from Jesus of Nazareth as He is set forth in the Scriptures; but as I observe what is becoming of the world when the contact with Jesus is broken, my faith is no longer so much troubled by the argument from modern authority, and I have come to wonder whether, after wandering in devious ways, we shall not be forced to come again, as little children, to the Lord Jesus Christ as He is set forth in the Holy Scriptures and offered to us in the gospel.

Let us unite in a word of prayer:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we give Thee thanks for the wonder of Thy grace in the gift of Christ our Lord and Saviour. How can we ever find words which shall not seem vain as we think of His love for us? How can we, without shame, try to give Thee thanks for that grace of Christ our Saviour who died for us, the Just for the unjust? And how can we think, without shame, of the ill way in which we have requited Thee for Thy love? But we rejoice in the knowledge that when by Thy Holy Spirit we have been united to Christ through faith we are His for ever. We pray Thee that thus we may be kept safe by One stronger than we are. And we pray with all our souls for those who have not found Christ as Saviour, that they may be led through the mists of error and doubt into the clear shining of the light of faith: that when they have sought other saviours and their souls are still restless, they may, through Christ, find their rest in Thee. And all that we ask is in the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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EDITORIAL

THE great fact about the Bible that must underlie all our thinking concerning it, and acting with reference to it, is the fact that it is *the* revelation from God to mankind. In an absolutely unique sense, it brings to men an authoritative message about God, about sin, and about the divine plan of salvation. It is upon the basis of this revelation that faith springs up in our hearts through the operation of the Spirit. Just here is the vital point. Faith does not engender revelation. It is the reverse which is true. Of course, the new being which results from saving faith will understand the divine revelation in a new way, but faith cannot produce revelation. That it can, is the mistaken idea which underlies a great deal of common talk and thought upon religious matters today. People say, "It does not matter so much what you believe, as long as you have a sincere belief," or, "You will find God by sincere trying, no matter what your particular form of belief." But there is no basis in the Scriptures for such ideas, nor are they borne out by sound practical experience. Sincere faith produces no revelation concerning the truth about God or man. The chief effect of its sincerity is to heighten its tragedy. The only sensible course is to beware of putting our faith in any form of spiritual or mystical exercise which has not solid authority in the teachings of Scripture. The purpose of Scripture is to reveal the truth about God and about man's relationship to God. Through the new birth, this scriptural revelation becomes a spring of living truth for each individual. It is the only safe fountain at which to quench one's thirst.

"Sin" is a word which people ordinarily do not like to hear, because they do not wish to be reminded of the unpleasant reality which it describes. They prefer to believe that sin is simply a figment of the imagination or, if they admit its existence, they do not enjoy being reminded of its true character. Possibly these truths have something to do with the observable fact that in that science which enjoys such a vogue at present, the science of comparative religions, the teaching of the various religions concerning sin is given comparatively little attention. In his latest book, *Der Mittler*, Emil Brunner calls attention to the fact that were a general history of religion to be written from the standpoint of the conception of sin as the dominant standard of comparison, "the theories of historical religious parallelism would collapse like a spider's web." This is cleaving with Excalibur itself, for is it not the essentially heinous character of sin which is the factor universally interrupting the fellowship of God

IS THE BIBLE RIGHT ABOUT JESUS?

II. THE WITNESS OF PAUL ¹

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

WE are considering the question whether the Bible is right about Jesus. This morning we considered, in a necessarily very brief and summary way, what the Bible says about Jesus; because obviously it is necessary to determine what the Bible says before we can consider the question whether what the Bible says is true. Certainly what the Bible says about Jesus contains many mysteries; but the distinctive features of it at least can be put almost in a word. Jesus of Nazareth, according to the Bible, was no product of this world, but a Saviour come voluntarily into this world from without. His entrance into the world was a stupendous miracle. While He was on earth He manifested a wondrous control over the forces of Nature. His death was no mere holy martyrdom, but an event of cosmic significance, a sacrifice for the sins of the world. His resurrection was no mere vain aspiration in the hearts of His disciples, but a mighty act of God. That is what the Bible says about Jesus.

That account, in practically all of the larger Churches today, is faced by an alternative account. According to that alternative account Jesus of Nazareth was the fairest of the children of men. He lived a life of wonderful purity and unselfishness. He was conscious of a wonderful closeness to God. He felt that He had a mission to bring others to that closeness of relationship with God that He Himself had. In order to express His sense of that mission He was unfortunately forced to use the categories of thought that prevailed in His day, and so He made the claim to be the Jewish Messiah. At first He won the favor of the crowd, but since He would not be the kind of leader that they desired He fell under their condemnation. He fell a victim, finally, to the hostility of the leaders of His people and the cowardice of the Roman governor, and died the common death of the criminals of that day upon the cross. After His death, His disciples were utterly discouraged. Even when He had been with them they had been far inferior to Him in spiritual discernment and in courage, and now that He was taken from them what little power they might have had seemed to be gone. They fled from Him in cowardly flight in the hour of His dire need. But then after His death they began to meditate upon His life with them, and as they mused thus upon their intercourse with Him the impression that His person had made upon them was too strong for them to believe that He had perished. Predisposed psychologically in that way they experienced certain hallucinations—experiences in which the optic nerve is really affected, but affected

¹ This is the second of a series of three addresses, given in King's Hall, London, on June 10, 1927, under the auspices of The Bible League of Great Britain. It has been revised by the author for *The Evangelical Student*, and is printed by his kind permission and that of The Bible League. The first address of the series was published in the October 1928 issue of this magazine, and it is planned to publish the third and final one in the next issue, that for April, 1929.

by a pathological condition in the subject himself, not by something in the external world. They thought they saw Him; and perhaps they thought they heard a word or two of His ringing in their ears. These pathological experiences were the means by which the influence of Jesus was continued upon the earth; they were the means by which those weak, discouraged disciples were changed into the spiritual conquerors of the world! It was really, we are told, just the personal influence of Jesus; but the personal influence of Jesus made itself felt, according to this account, in that pathological form.

The really great question in the modern Church is this: Which of these two accounts of Jesus is correct? People often obscure this issue, and tell us that we should not pay too much attention to theological controversy. Let us just be good Christians, we are told, and have faith in Jesus, and not bother our heads about the theological issue of the present day! Of course, such a way of thinking ignores the central question at issue. The central question is whether Jesus of Nazareth was such a one as that faith in Him for men of the twentieth century is absurd, or whether He was such a One as the Bible presents to us, in whom we can have confidence for this world and for the world to come.

How shall we as historians investigate this all-important question? It is customary in modern discussion of the question to begin with certain interesting documents which have come down to us from the first century of our era. I refer to the Epistles of Paul. There we have a fixed starting-point in all controversy. All serious historians of the present day, whether they are Christians or not, are agreed that most of the Epistles of Paul, to say the least, were actually written by the man whose name they bear. There we have at least a fixed point in controversy.

Now, if you will examine the Epistles of Paul, you will discover, even on the basis of those Epistles alone, quite apart from the Gospels, and quite apart even from the Book of Acts (though the general outline of the life of Paul in the Book of Acts is generally accepted even by sceptical historians of the present day), that the Paul who wrote those letters was actually a contemporary of the Jesus of Nazareth whose life we are studying today. He speaks in one of the universally accepted Epistles of having come into contact with the brother of this Jesus (namely, in Gal. 1:19). So Paul was a contemporary of Jesus, a man of the first Christian generation, a man who according to his own testimony had been in direct contact with the brother of Jesus and with Peter, the chief of the intimate friends of Jesus.

The testimony of such a man with regard to the all-important question of the origin of our religion, which is also the question of the truth of our religion, is certainly of the utmost value.

If you will examine the Epistles of Paul you will discover one fact at least—you will discover that Paul was a man who had among his other gifts a remarkable gift of self-revelation. It is perfectly true that we know comparatively little of the details of his life; even if we use all the sources of information which are contained in the New Testament long years of his life are a complete blank. During a large part of his life

we cannot trace his movements; we are left entirely in the dark. Despite that fact, however, we are given in the Epistles such intimate contact with the man himself that it is a true word which, I believe, has somewhere been spoken, that Paul is probably the best known man of antiquity.

There are men whom one never comes to know. There are men with whom I have had contact day after day and year after year, and whom yet I have never come to *know*. There are other men into communion with whom I can come by the briefest intercourse. So it is with the Apostle Paul. Without a touch of morbid introspection, without vanity, in the most natural and genuine way, he has allowed us a glimpse into his very inmost soul. He has revealed to us the depths of his life; he has revealed that which makes him great in the history of the world, namely (if I may use the fashionable modern term), his wonderful "religious experience."

As it is looked at thus from the outside by modern historians, the religion of Paul is a matter about which there can be some agreement. The religion of Paul, it is discovered, is distinctly a religion of redemption. It is a religion of redemption in that it begins with the most thoroughgoing pessimism with regard to the condition of humanity that could possibly be imagined. You may understand the difference between a religion of redemption and what is not a religion of redemption by comparing the religion of Paul with the religion of the Modernist Church. The religion of the Modernist Church is a distinctive example of a religion which is *not* a redemptive religion. It begins with optimism as to the present condition of humanity. It begins with what a famous preacher in America has designated as an article which should certainly be put into our creed, namely, "I believe in man." That is not a religion of redemption.

But the religion of Paul—as is recognized just as clearly, in some instances at least, by modern historians who do not at all accept that religion for themselves, as it is by conservative scholars—the religion of Paul is distinctly a religion of redemption. It begins with the most radical pessimism with regard to the present condition of mankind that could possibly be imagined. Such pessimism, of course, fills with disgust and horror the modern historians of whom I have spoken; but they must recognize the fact that whether they themselves like it or not such was the religion of Paul. Paul believed that the human race is lost in sin, and that a divine event took place outside the walls of Jerusalem when Jesus of Nazareth died apparently as a criminal upon the Cross—that there an event took place which put a new face upon the world, an event of cosmic significance that brought about a revolution in those who were affected by it so far as their relation to God is concerned.

Of course, that character of the religion of Paul as a redemptive religion involves necessarily a certain view of the One by whom redemption was wrought. It is inconceivable that a mere man could by his death thus effect something of cosmic significance. So it is not surprising that Paul held a very peculiar view of this Jesus of Nazareth. It is perfectly plain—I mean on the basis of the Epistles alone—that Paul separated Jesus from ordinary humanity, and placed Him on the side of God. It is indeed

disputed, though I think wrongly, by modern historians whether he ever applied to Jesus the Greek word which we translate by the word "God" in our English Bible. According to any common-sense interpretation of Romans 9:5, he certainly did; and the fact is recognized even by some whose general view of the religion of Paul might make another interpretation to them more agreeable. But that is a question of minor importance, because it is perfectly plain, at any rate, that Paul constantly applies to Jesus the Greek term which is translated "Lord"; and that term is the term which is used in the Greek Old Testament, that Paul used, to translate the word "Jehovah," the most awful and holy name of the God of Israel.

Moreover, it is interesting to observe that just the most recent research has demonstrated, or thinks it has demonstrated, the fact that even in the pagan world of that day that word "Lord" was distinctly a term of divinity. Hence it is a case where "a little learning is a dangerous thing" when some modern preachers never use the word "Lord" in reference to Jesus, but use only the word "Master." It is perfectly true that the Greek word *kyrios* ("Lord") is used to designate "master" in ordinary human relationship; but it is also perfectly clear that its connotation as it is used in the New Testament is entirely different. Modern men sometimes use the word "Master" predominantly with reference to Jesus with the notion that they need a simple word used in ordinary life. But as a matter of fact they should not seek an ordinary word if they are to translate the word *kyrios*; but they should seek a highly specialized word; and such a word is the word *kyrios* in the Epistles of Paul. Paul's terminology for the Trinity is this: *theos*, "God"; *kyrios*, "Lord"; *pneuma*, "Spirit."² But it is just the same Trinity of three Persons in one God as that which is designated by "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost."

So the terminology bears out the fact that Paul regards Jesus as clearly on the side of God. But we do not need to depend upon the terminology; because the thing itself is perfectly plain. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians, we have these truly stupendous words—to modern sceptical historians they seem to be most extraordinary, however familiar they may have become to us—"Paul, an apostle not from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." There we have a separation of Jesus Christ from ordinary humanity and the placing of Him on the side of God!

It is true that Paul elsewhere speaks of Jesus as a man. He speaks elsewhere of "the man Christ Jesus." But if you will examine those passages you may discover that Paul speaks of Jesus as a man as though it were something strange, something wonderful that He should be a man; and at any rate the prevailing way in which he speaks of Jesus involves a clear separation of Jesus from ordinary humanity and a placing of Him on the side of God.

² See Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, 1907, p. 231.

But you do not need to appeal to individual passages, because the outstanding fact is that Paul stands everywhere in a religious relationship to Jesus Christ. The religion of Paul does not consist merely in having faith in God like the faith which Jesus had in God, but it consists essentially in having faith in Jesus Christ. Modern sceptical historians again may be our teachers here; for they regard that as the supreme problem in the history of the Church. The supreme problem to these historians is the problem how in the world a faith in God like the faith which Jesus had in God and which these historians regard Jesus Himself as having inculcated in His disciples can ever have given place, by a stupendous, a momentous change, upon which nineteen centuries of history have been based, to a faith in Jesus Himself. And that change took place before the time of Paul. That is a fact which cannot be denied—Jesus was for Paul not primarily an example for faith but an object of faith.

Of course, if you hold, as most of us here present no doubt hold, that Jesus was truly God, then this attitude of Paul is cause for no surprise. But far different is it if you occupy the position of modern historians who regard Jesus as a mere man. In that case, you have Jesus, a mere man; and then you have Paul, one of His contemporaries, according to the Epistles whose genuineness everyone admits, separating this Jesus from ordinary humanity and placing Him on the side of God. If that be the way in which we are to look at it, what we have here is an extraordinary instance of deification, the attribution of deity to a mere man on the part, not of later generations, but of one of His contemporaries.

I have often quoted (for I think it is significant) the admission of a man who, I suppose, was the typical representative of that view of Jesus which regards Jesus as a mere man, namely, the late H. J. Holtzmann. Holtzmann said that for this extraordinary deification of the man Jesus as it appears in the Epistles of Paul he was able to cite no parallel in the religious history of the race.³ Oh, you may say, how about the deification of the Roman Emperors, either at their death or during their lifetime? But that is totally different in its lack of seriousness, and far more important than all that, it is totally different from this deification of the man Jesus because it is found in a polytheistic environment. If Paul had been a polytheist who could believe in many gods, then perhaps he might have added Jesus to the gods that he already worshipped. But Paul was clearly a monotheist; for if the Pharisaic Judaism of the first century was anything it was an enthusiastic monotheism. I suppose its insistence upon monotheism was not exceeded even by the Mohammedanism of the present day. Monotheism was the very centre and core of their belief—a horror of many gods, and a separation of God from the world. Yet it was this monotheist, sprung from a race of monotheists, who in his Epistles everywhere places the man Jesus, who had lived a short time before, and had died a shameful death, clearly on the side of God, and pays to Him homage that is due to God alone.

³ Holtzmann, in *Protestantische Monatshefte*, iv, 1900, pp. 465f, and in *Christliche Welt*, xxiv, 1910, column 153.

If we went no further we should be led to ask who this Jesus was who could thus be raised to deity by one of His contemporaries. But our surprise as historians reaches its height when we observe this curious fact—that Paul does not argue about this strange view of Jesus. Paul does not seem, in his earlier Epistles at least, where he is dealing with Palestinian Judaism, to regard this lofty view of Jesus as a thing about which one word of argument was needed. “Oh,” you may say, “Paul, of course, was not in the habit of arguing!” Well, was he not? When it came to matters about which there was a dispute in the churches of his day, we may thank God that Paul was not a man who was averse to argument or controversy, because if Paul had been a man averse to controversy, as many leaders of the Modernist Church say that they are, we should have no Christianity today—I mean, when we look at the thing from the human point of view. God might have raised up another instrument; but as a matter of fact it was through the Apostle Paul and men like him that our Christianity was preserved.

No, Paul certainly was in the habit of arguing. He argues about the place of the law, for example, and the all-sufficiency of faith, and the like; but when it comes to this truly stupendous view which he has of Jesus he seems to assume that his view is also the view even of his bitter opponents like the Judaizers attacked in the Epistle to the Galatians. Nowhere does there appear to have been in the early apostolic age any color of support for disagreement with the view held by Paul of the person of Christ.

One can hardly avoid the conclusion, on the basis of a study of the Epistles of Paul, that when Paul does not argue about this matter it is because no argument was needed, because Paul's view was accepted as a matter of course. That involves this stupendous conclusion, that Peter and the very brother of Jesus, men who had walked and talked with Jesus on earth, who had seen Him subject to the petty limitations of human life—that these men actually agreed with this stupendous view of Jesus as a supernatural Person, an object of worship, as He is presented in the Epistles of Paul.

On the basis of the Epistles alone, therefore, we should ask ourselves: “Who was this Jesus? What manner of Person was He that He could thus be raised to divine dignity, not by later generations, but by His own intimate friends?”

The religion of Paul is a phenomenon of history that requires an explanation, and the modern historians have been willing to accept the challenge. The central problem, I suppose, which has confronted modern historians who have tried to construct the origin of Christianity without building it upon a supernatural Christ, is the problem of the origin of this religion of Paul. Four hypotheses with regard to it may be distinguished.

The first is the simple one that Paul's religion was founded upon the real Christ; that Paul came to believe Jesus to be a supernatural Person for the simple reason that as a matter of fact Jesus *was* a supernatural Person; in other words, that Paul's religion is founded upon the actual descent of a supernatural Person into this world for its redemption, whose

death was an event of cosmic significance, and whose resurrection followed as the completion of His redeeming work. That is the supernaturalistic hypothesis, and if that be accepted the whole problem is solved.

But there are other explanations which have been proposed in recent years, and they are alike in denying the entrance into this world of any creative act of God in distinction from the use by God of the forces of nature. The first of these explanations is the "Liberal" or Ritschlian view, which has been dominant in many quarters in the Church for a good many years. There are some indications that among scholars this reconstruction is tottering to its ruin, but still in America, and I believe in this country as well, it dominates the popular presentation of Christianity from the modern naturalistic point of view. According to this explanation, Paul was a true disciple of Jesus in his religious experience, but Paul's theology was the mere temporary form in which in his day that religious experience had to be expressed. That is the hypothesis. You must distinguish the kernel from the husk, it is said. Paul was really affected by the lofty moral life of the real human person, Jesus of Nazareth; but he had to express what he owed to Jesus in the (now outworn) categories of his time—the notion of the atoning death of Christ and the like. It is the business of the modern Christian, according to that view, to discard the husk in order to retain the precious kernel. Paul's religion, according to that formula, comes from the real Jesus, and is a permanent possession of the human race, while Paul's theology, being the mere temporary husk to preserve that kernel, was derived from other sources, and may now safely be discarded by the modern Church.

That hypothesis has been set forth in dozens or hundreds of brilliant books. But in 1904 it suffered a most extraordinary attack, not from a conservative scholar, but from a radical historian, namely William Wrede of Breslau, who pointed out that the whole separation between Paul's religion and Paul's theology, is quite unhistorical, that the religion of Paul is intimately connected with his theology, and that in the Epistles of Paul you do not find quotations of the words of Jesus and citations of His example, but what you do find is the reiteration again and again of the cosmic significance of His death and resurrection.

Of course it was easy for the "Liberal" or Ritschlian historians to point out the excesses of Wrede's view. It was perfectly easy for them to show that Wrede was wrong in supposing that Paul knew little or nothing about the details of the words and deeds of Jesus. It was easy to show that Paul tells in his Epistles more than Wrede supposed, and that he knew far more than in the Epistles he has chosen to tell. The incidental way in which he refers to the institution of the Lord's Supper, for example, seems clearly to show that his information was taken from a fund of further information which was given to the Churches in the beginning. "The Lord Jesus, the night in which He was betrayed"—do you not see that it presupposes a whole account of the events connected with the betrayal? We know what is meant because we have read the story in the Gospels, but it would be a riddle if we did not know about the betrayal by Judas. And elsewhere, as well as in this passage, it is

easy to see that Paul had evidently told the Churches far more than in the Epistles he has found occasion to repeat. And indeed that is altogether natural; because if these people in the Churches were asked to take a man who had lived but a few years before as their Saviour, the object of their adoration, questions would have to be asked and answered as to what manner of Person this was.

Wrede's opponents in the camp of modern Liberalism were able to point out the defects of his reconstruction, but they utterly failed to refute him at the central point; it is perfectly clear, as Wrede observed, that the very centre of Paul's religious life is found just in those things which the Liberal historians had rejected or had minimized as a mere temporary expression of some deeper experience, namely, the significance of the Cross of Christ, and so on. Where does the current of Paul's religious life run full and free? Surely it is in the great theological passages of the Epistles—the second chapter of Galatians, the fifth chapter of II. Corinthians, the eighth chapter of Romans. Those are the passages in which you have the very centre of Paul's life; and so much, at least, Wrede observed, even though he himself did not believe for himself one word of what Paul teaches in these matters. Never was Wrede really refuted by his opponents in the Liberal camp. According to Wrede, Paul's religion and his theology go together; and if his theology came from somewhere else than the real Jesus, his religion came from somewhere else too. So Wrede ventured on the assertion that Paul was the second founder of Christianity, a more powerful influence in historic Christianity, perhaps, though not a more beneficent influence, than Jesus Himself. If you hold that Jesus was a mere man, do you not see the justification for that view? Liberal historians had produced a Jesus who had really little in common with the Apostle Paul, and the radical view of Wrede was the nemesis to which they were naturally subjected. So a vast literature on the subject sprang up. But you have a feeling, as you read the works of the Liberal historians, that in refuting Wrede they get nowhere. They refute him in detail, but they do not touch the central point.

What would the solution be? It is perfectly plain. The Liberal theologians were quite right as over against Wrede in holding that Paul knew much more about the details of the life of Jesus than Wrede supposed. There the Liberal historians were right. But Wrede was entirely right as over against them in holding that the Jesus upon whom Paul's religion was based was not the reduced Jesus of modern naturalism, but the stupendous Person who is presented in the Epistles themselves. What, then, is the solution? It is perfectly simple, as I have said. It is simply that Paul's religion was based upon the Jesus whose death and resurrection were events of cosmic significance, that that Jesus was the real Jesus, that there was not that amazing break between the man Jesus and the One whom Paul, with abundant opportunity of acquainting himself with His life, presented in his Epistles, that the Jesus of the Epistles of Paul was the real Jesus who walked this earth.

But then, if you reject this supernaturalistic solution, and hold, with Wrede, that Paul's religion was not based upon the real Jesus, whence

did it really come? Wrede said that it came from pre-Christian Judaism, that Paul had a lofty idea of the Messiah before he was converted, and that no essential change was wrought by his conversion except that he came to believe that this Messiah had come to this earth. But that view has been generally felt to break down; there are few who hold it today. It must be rejected for many reasons, and particularly for the reason that the loftiest view of the Messiah which you find in the apocalyptic books that are thought to preserve for us the doctrine upon which Paul is supposed to be dependent falls far short of the view which Paul holds of Jesus. There is no doctrine of the deity of the Messiah in those Jewish apocalyptic books, and no trace of the warm religious relationship between the believer and the Messiah. So you would be obliged to come to this extraordinary conclusion, that when the lofty Messiah of pre-Christian Jewish speculation was identified with a mere human being, that identification with a mere human being, instead of drawing down this pre-Christian Jewish notion of the Messiah, lifted it far beyond men's wildest dreams.

The last of the naturalistic hypotheses is that Paul's religion and theology came essentially from the religion of the contemporary pagan world. But that hypothesis is faced with many difficulties with which we have not here time to deal—the difficulty, for instance, of answering the question how contemporary paganism could ever have influenced the life of Paul at the centre either before or after his conversion, and the difficulty found in the fact that the supposed parallels on examination really break down. Therefore, I think, we may say that unless Jesus be the kind of person that is presupposed in the Epistles of Paul, the attempts which have so far been made to explain in some other way the origin of the religion of Paul have not yet attained success. In the Epistles we discover a problem which leads us on beyond our easy complacency in a naturalistic view of the world toward what modern men think of with antipathy as the abyss of supernaturalism; and then we are led to the question whether the stupendous Saviour who is presented in the Epistles of Paul was not truly One who came to this earth for our redemption, and in whom we may have confidence alike for this world and for the world to come.

Let us unite in a word of prayer:

We thank Thee for the witness of the Apostle Paul who was Thy chosen messenger. We rejoice in the glory of these matchless books which have enabled men to live lives of victory over sin and have stayed their souls. And we pray that this great Apostle may again be heard, that the darkness may be dispelled, and that men may find here the great charter of Christian liberty, that without merit of their own, but through the blood of Christ, they may be free for evermore. Amen.

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EDITORIAL

WHY is it that some Christian people are always looking *forward* to having a good time? Are you one of them? Why not have a good time *now*? That such an experience is possible is one of the glorious things about being a Christian. There is a double reason for this. Both Jesus and Paul by the Holy Spirit impress upon us through the pages of the New Testament that God is the Sovereign of this universe and that all things are under His control. If our Father,—for if we are Christians, *then* we are sons of God and God is our Father,—if our Father is the almighty sovereign Ruler of all, how can we help rejoicing in what happens under His rule?

And the second reason is that God has sent His Holy Spirit to be the immediate Companion and Guide of every Christian and by His supernatural power to make possible the fulfilment of the injunction in the inspired epistle of Paul to the Philippians (4:4), "Rejoice in the Lord always," and that in Ephesians (5:20), "Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." These things being so, there is no escape from the conclusion that it is the Christian's privilege to be having a good time *now*.

This does not mean that there will not be times when we will have greater joy than at others. A great victory for Christ in our own heart or in the heart of another will produce such added joy. Nor, and this is more important, is this simply an expression of that cheap disregard of all difficulties which simply says, "Smile, smile, smile." It is because facts are recognized, not disregarded, and because the proper place is given to that great fact the sovereignty of the Christian's Heavenly Father that it is possible and desirable that the Christian should always have a good time.

What has caused the number of missionary volunteers to fall off to such a notable extent during the past few years? This question is being given increasing attention, and it is well worthy of it. That the enrolments in the Student Volunteer Movement in 1928 were only one-tenth as many as they were in 1920 is startling and demands explanation. Many solutions are offered. The causes advanced range through 1) the increasing demand for highly-trained specialists as missionaries, 2) the widespread impression that the growth of nationalist feeling on mission fields makes mission work unfruitful or useless, 3) a feeling of disgust with denominational rivalries, 4) the inadequate standard of remuneration, 5) the

IS THE BIBLE RIGHT ABOUT JESUS? III. THE WITNESS OF THE GOSPELS*

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

TODAY we have been considering the question: "Is the Bible Right about Jesus?" This afternoon we considered the witness of Paul. We observed that in the Epistles of Paul we have a fixed starting-point in all the controversy of the present day, since the genuineness of these Epistles is not denied by any serious historians—at least the genuineness of the chief of them. In the Epistles of Paul, we have Jesus presented clearly as a supernatural person, not primarily as an example for religious faith, but as the object of religious faith. We observed further that that stupendous presentation of the person of Jesus which is found everywhere in the Epistles of Paul is so presupposed as a matter beyond debate that the historian can hardly avoid the extraordinary conclusion that that lofty view of Jesus was also the view of those with whom Paul had come into contact, namely, the intimate friends of Jesus who had lived with Him when He was upon this earth.

Therefore as we examine the phenomenon of the religion of Paul, which is a fact of history that no serious historian denies, this question arises in our minds: Who was this Jesus who thus could be raised to divine dignity, and that not by later generations, but by His own contemporaries in the first Christian generation—so raised even by those who had seen Him subject to all the limitations of human life in their intercourse with Him while He was upon this earth? Even if the historian possessed only the Epistles of Paul as sources of historical information about Jesus, he would have enough to give him pause. But as a matter of fact we have other sources of information about Jesus; for in the four Gospels we find an extended picture of Him, an extended account of His life upon earth.

I shall not stop here to consider certain very important questions with regard to the Gospels, namely, questions of literary criticism with regard to the date and authorship of these books, except to say just in passing that the evidence for the authorship of one of these books—the Gospel according to Luke—is of such a singularly cogent kind that to the astonishment of the learned world it has within recent years convinced some scholars whose view as to the origin of Christianity is just as much out of accord with the traditional view of the authorship of these books as could possibly be imagined. You have the extraordinary phenomenon that

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scholars like Professor von Harnack, of Berlin, whose view as to the origin of Christianity is of a thoroughly naturalistic kind, as far removed as possible from that which is present in the Lucan writings, have been so much impressed by the argument from literary criticism that they have actually come to the traditional view that the Gospel according to Luke was written by Luke the physician and companion of Paul, who was in Palestine in the year A.D. 58, and was there in A.D. 60, and probably during the interval (these dates being pushed back a few years if another chronology is adopted), so that he actually came into direct contact with James, the brother of this Jesus whom we are studying tonight.

I might point out, too, with regard to all of the Gospels, that there is a certain self-evidencing quality in their narrative. Personal testimony is a very subtle thing; and when you face a witness on the witness-stand the credence which you will give to his testimony is dependent very often upon the subtle impression that you obtain of the person testifying. That sort of evidence, which often attains a high degree of value, has a larger place in the production of Christian conviction than often is supposed. If you are troubled with doubts about the truth of this extraordinary narrative which you have in the four Gospels, I should commend to you the exercise of reading one of the Gospels through from beginning to end with something like the rapidity which you apply every morning to the morning newspaper or to any book of the day. At other times study the Gospels, but for once just *read* the Gospels. I sometimes think that perhaps that is the reason why God has given us one Gospel which is so short as the Gospel according to Mark—that at one sitting we might easily read the whole book through. In the Gospel according to Mark you are not asked to sit quietly at the feet of Jesus and listen in an extended way to His teaching. You are not taken into the intimacy of His circle as is the case in the Gospel according to John. But you are asked to look at Him with something of the wonder which was in the minds of those first observers in the synagogue at Capernaum. It is a Gospel that makes a first impression; and I tell you, when you read it, if you will brush out of your mind everything you have read about it, and will let the total impression of it be made upon your mind, there will come to you an overpowering impression that that witness is telling the truth.

So it is also with the Gospel according to John. It has been my business for a great many years to read a great many things that have been said against the trustworthiness of the Gospel according to John, and sometimes, as I have read, I have been impressed with the plausibleness of much that is said; but at other times, after filling my mind with what is said about the Gospel according to John, I have just conceived the notion of reading, not what is said *about* the book, but the book itself, and when I have done that the impression has been overpowering. It does seem perfectly plain that the author of this book is claiming to be an eye-witness of the wonderful events that he narrates. There is no writer of the New Testament who lays greater stress upon the plain testimony of the senses than he, and the keyword of the Gospel, I think, is found in the words:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.” You cannot sublimate those words into meaning merely that we human beings have heard about the incarnate Word, but they spring from the wondering gratitude of a man who himself had had the inestimable privilege of touching with his hands and hearing with his ears and seeing with his eyes the incarnate Word of God. When you read the book you have the overpowering impression that the author is telling the truth; and the hypothesis to which you are logically forced if you hold that the book is not true—the hypothesis that this writer is engaging in a refined bit of deception by subtly making the false impression of being an eye-witness when he was no eye-witness at all—this hypothesis becomes, when you become acquainted with the man by reading his narrative for yourself, a monstrous hypothesis indeed.

Tonight I propose not to examine these questions of literary criticism in detail, but just to take for a moment the total picture of Jesus that is provided in the Gospels. And I may say at the start that that picture is a picture of just the kind of person that is presupposed in the Epistles of Paul. Yet there does not seem to be the slightest evidence of any dependence of the writers of the Gospels upon the Epistles. In the Epistles of Paul there is presupposed everywhere a Jesus who was a supernatural person and yet lived a life upon this earth; and you have just such a person presented in all the Gospels.

There are three things that need to be said about the modern reconstruction of Jesus as distinguished from the Jesus who is presented to us in the Gospels. In the first place, that reconstruction involves the elimination of the supernatural from the life of Jesus; because the Jesus of all the Gospels is clearly a supernatural person. It used to be held, perhaps, that you have a difference in the Gospels in this respect; at one time, perhaps, the divine Christ of John was contrasted with the human Christ of Mark. But modern criticism of the Gospels has tended powerfully against any such distinction as that; and it is admitted by the dominant school of criticism today that in the Gospel according to Mark as well as in the Gospel according to John you have presented to you not a mere teacher but a supernatural person whose death had some sort of redeeming significance, not a teacher of righteousness merely, but a Saviour, essentially the sort of supernatural Christ that is presented in the Epistles of Paul.

Here is a strange problem: the Jesus of the Gospels is a supernatural person; He is plainly a real person who lived upon this earth; and yet from the point of view of modern naturalistic criticism a supernatural person can never be real, because by such criticism the supernatural has been eliminated from the pages of history.

Perhaps it may be well to say a word in passing as to what we mean by the “supernatural,” what we mean by a “miracle.” It is true, there is nothing more unpopular in the discussion of religious questions at the present day than this humble matter of the definition of terms; many persons are very angry when they are asked to check the flow of their thought by so humble a thing as a definition! Many definitions of the

word "miracle" have been proposed, but I confess that the only one of them that seems to me satisfactory is one which I learned many years ago. "A miracle," according to that definition, "is an event in the external world that is wrought by the *immediate* power of God." That does not mean that while other events are not wrought by God a miracle is wrought by Him. But it means that in the case of other events God uses means, whereas in the case of a miracle He puts forth His creative power just as truly as in that mighty act of creation which underlies the whole process of the world.

When you adopt that definition of a miracle you have based all your thinking upon a certain very definite philosophy, and that definite philosophy upon which you have based your thinking is called theism—if you will pardon a technical term for a very simple thing. It is the view of the world which Jesus of Nazareth held, as well as the view of the world which has been held by many philosophers. In a truly theistic view of the world it is almost as necessary to assert the real existence of an order of nature as it is to assert the real existence of a personal God. People say nowadays that we who hold to a belief in miracles are doing away with the possibility of science—science which seeks to set forth the orderly course of this world. As a matter of fact, we are being much more kind to science than science is kind to itself; because we are asserting that the order of nature has a real objective existence, a thing which, as I understand it, the scientists of the present day, from the scientific point of view, do not find it necessary to assert at all. We assert that there is such a thing as a really existent order of nature, created by God, upheld at every moment by God, not a machine set going by God and let alone, but something that is under God's control and yet a really existent thing. And what is meant from that point of view as a miracle is the entrance of the *creative* power of God at some point in the course of the world. I do not see how if you really believe in creation at all—and I do not see how unless you believe in creation you can hold to a theistic view of the world—you can have any objection of principle to the entrance of creative acts of God within the course of the world.

So much for the definition of miracle. From that point of view, it is clear that the miracles of the New Testament have a stupendous significance. Some one will say: "What a degrading thing it is that we should suppose that this order of nature had to be broken into. You are requiring us to suppose that there have been unaccountable and meaningless events; and our reasonable view of the world is gone!" Not at all, my friends. A miracle from the Christian point of view is not a disorderly thing, but it springs from the source of all the order that there is in the world—namely, the will of God.

Very well, in the New Testament you have Jesus presented as a supernatural person, and you have in the New Testament an account of miracles. At that point many persons enter upon a very peculiar line of thought. Many devout persons nowadays, even persons who believe in the fact of the miracles, will tell you that while miracles used to be an aid to faith,

now they are a hindrance to faith; that people used to believe in Jesus because of the miracles, but that now when they already believe in Him on other grounds they may then come to a belief in miracles, so that although the miracles may be a hindrance that can be overcome, still they are not an aid to faith, but a hindrance; that people used to believe in Jesus *because* of the miracles, but now they believe *in spite* of the miracles. Such a way of thinking involves a very curious confusion. Of course, it is perfectly true from one point of view that miracles are an obstacle to faith—but who ever denied it? The more commonplace a narrative is, the easier it is to believe. If I told you that as I walked the streets of this city I met several of my fellow-beings, my narrative would be very much superior to the narrative of the New Testament in one particular; it would certainly be far easier to believe. But then it is not likely that anyone would be very much interested in it. So, without miracles, the narrative of the Gospels would certainly be far easier to believe; but, do you not see, it would not be worth believing. Without the miracles, the thing that you would be believing would be a totally different thing from that which you are believing now. Without the miracles, you would have in Jesus a teacher and example; but with the miracles you have a Saviour from your sins.

So the Jesus presented in the Gospels is a supernatural person. But from the point of view of the presuppositions of Modernism a supernatural person never existed upon this earth. What is the conclusion? It would seem to be that this Jesus never lived at all. There have been here and there a few who have held that view—Kalthoff and Drews in Germany, and W. B. Smith in America. These men have held that there was no real person corresponding to the Jesus of the Gospels at all. But that view is not held by really important historians. It is perfectly plain that we have here an account of a real person living at a definite time upon this earth, and that if the whole picture is to be regarded as fictitious then there is no way in the sphere of history of distinguishing truth from sham.

So this Jesus was a real person; He was a supernatural person; and yet, according to Modernist historians, a supernatural person is never real! What is the solution from the Modernist point of view? The solution proposed is that you have two elements in the Gospels: first a picture of the real, the purely human Jesus; and, secondly, a defacement of that picture by miraculous ornamentation: and that it is the duty of the modern historian to recover the picture of the true human Jesus; it is his duty to remove the coating of the supernatural which in the Gospels has almost completely defaced the portrait, to tear away from Jesus these tawdry trappings of the supernatural, in order that the true presentation of the man Jesus may burst upon the world.

It seemed at first, from the naturalistic point of view, to be a very hopeful task. You might say, of course, that the way to do it would be to claim that while the Gospels as we have them are full of the supernatural, if you get back to the original sources it would not be so at all. But the trouble is that in the earliest sources reconstructed, rightly or

wrongly, by modern criticism you have similar supernatural elements. So you have to go to work in some other way. All you can do is simply to go through the Gospels and just take the supernatural out. So a hundred years ago men went very hopefully to work. They said that the events narrated in the Gospels were historical, but not really supernatural; that the first observers put a false supernaturalistic interpretation upon events that were really perfectly natural. When, for example, it is said in the first chapter of Luke that Zacharias went into the temple, certainly it was true that a man of that name went into the temple, and that in the dim religious light he saw the smoke of the incense rising up, and thought in the solemnity of the moment that it was an angel, and that, as he had been thinking about certain things he thought that the angel spoke words to him. That is an example of what is called technically the rationalising method of dealing with the miracle narratives.

The most powerful critic, perhaps, of the rationalising method was not an orthodox theologian; but it was David Friedrich Strauss. The famous *Life of Christ* of Strauss appeared in 1835. It was directed against two opponents. In the first place, it was directed against the supernaturalistic view of Jesus, which takes these stories of the miracles at their face value and believes that they are sober fact. Strauss directed all the power of his attack against that view of the believing Christian about the miracles in the Gospels. And I should like to say that if you want a really powerful criticism of the Gospel narratives on the negative side, a really powerful attack against their truthfulness, you cannot do better than go back to the original *Life of Christ* by Strauss, because you will find that most of those who deal with the matter today are far inferior to Strauss in acumen and in the other qualities that are necessary to the task.

But Strauss also attacked the rationalising method to which I have just referred. He pointed out how ridiculous it is, when the thing for which the whole narrative exists is the miracle in it, to take away the miracle and think you have anything left. No, said Strauss; the whole reason for which these narratives were formed is found in the miracles that they contain; and if the miracles are not historical the thing to say is that nothing is historical and that these miracle narratives are just the clothing of some religious idea in historical form.

That is the mythical view of Strauss—that the narratives are to be taken as a whole and are to be regarded as the clothing in historical form of a religious idea. So if you are to get the miracles out of the Gospels, you have to go to work much more subtly than was thought necessary by Paulus and the early rationalisers. It is clear that you cannot just take out the miracles and leave the rest, but that if you are going to take out the miracles, you must also take a great deal of the rest of the narrative which exists simply for the sake of the miracles.

Here, then, is the phenomenon that has appeared in the modern criticism of the Gospels. You proceed to take the miracles out; in doing so you find to your consternation that great shreds of the rest have to come out also. It is like pulling a pound of flesh out of a living body. Very naturally,

therefore, there is a tendency in recent criticism to approach nearer and nearer to the absurd view that it is *all* unhistorical. That is the first difficulty in reconstructing your purely human Jesus—the difficulty of separating the miracles from the rest—because the whole picture is not an agglomeration, but an organism.

Then there is a second difficulty. Suppose you have taken the miracles out of the Gospels and have got a purely human Jesus. It cannot be done, but let us suppose it could be done—you have your human Jesus who never worked miracles (except miracles that you could explain away, such as faith-healing and the like, which are not miracles at all). It would look as though, from the naturalistic point of view, you were in a hopeful condition. At last you have the real Jesus whom we moderns can accept. But the trouble is that when you have reconstructed your purely human Jesus, you find that he is an entirely unbelievable figure. He is not only a person who never *did* exist, but he is one who never *could* have existed. He has a moral and psychological contradiction at the root of His being. That moral and psychological contradiction arises from the stupendous fact of the Messianic self-consciousness of Jesus. It is a fact that the Jesus of the Gospels really did hold that He was the Messiah, and that He held that He was the Messiah, not in some lower political sense, as though it meant merely that He was a King of David's line, but in the stupendous sense that He was actually to sit on the throne of God and be the instrument in judging the earth.

Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. There is much misinterpretation of the term, "Son of Man," on the part of the readers of the Gospels; but it seems perfectly plain that the term does not set forth the human nature of Jesus as over against the divine nature at all, but is a reference to the tremendous scene in the seventh chapter of Daniel, in which one like unto a son of man is represented as being present with the Ancient of Days. The term, "Son of Man," is perhaps a more lofty, a more stupendous, a more supernatural designation of Jesus in the Gospels than the term, "Son of God," at least as that term might be understood in the minds of the people.

People sometimes say: "We are not interested in theology and metaphysics and all that; we are not interested in the doctrine that the creeds set forth about the person of our Lord. It is sufficient for us to read the Sermon on the Mount and try to do what Jesus there says and get rid of all theology." Well, the Sermon on the Mount contains a most stupendous theology; and it contains a stupendous theology just in its presentation of the person of Jesus. If there is one passage in the whole of the New Testament which is loved by the Modernist Church it is the passage in which Jesus represents the scene at the last judgment, where it is said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." But just in that very passage you have the stupendous notion presented by Jesus Himself that *He* is to be the one who will sit on the throne of God at the final judgment and be the judge of human beings who

have lived in all the periods of history. Why, it is a perfectly stupendous theology, a perfectly stupendous presentation of the majesty of the person of Jesus. What would you think of a mere man who should look out upon his contemporaries and say that *he* was to be the one who was to determine their eternal destiny at the last judgment? You would say he was unbalanced or insane. Some persons are saying that about Jesus today. They have written long and learned books to show the particular kind of insanity with which Jesus was afflicted. It does not worry me a bit. Indeed, I think it is a hopeful sign of the times that these alienists should be investigating the case of a mere man who thought he was divine. At the time when there were emperors of China it used to be thought a pretty sure sign of insanity for a man to declare that he was emperor of China; but, you know, if actually the emperor of China had declared that he was *not* the emperor but someone else, that would have been an equally sure sign of insanity. So these alienists are investigating the case of a man who thought he was divine and was *not* divine; but against one who thought He was divine and *was* divine they have, obviously, nothing to say.

In other words, you have here in modern form the old problem of the stupendous claims of Jesus. How could Jesus have made these claims if they were not true? Some have held that Jesus never really made the claims, that He never claimed to be the Messiah at all. But that view has been held by comparatively few modern scholars, because it is faced by such an overpowering weight of contrary evidence. It was the claim to be the Messiah that cost Jesus His life. That claim is thus deeply rooted in the narrative. Usually, therefore, modern scholars pursue a different policy. They say that Jesus did not know how to express His sense of a mission except in the (somewhat unsatisfactory) category of Messiahship. Sometimes they have held that it was at the baptism that He came to think that He was the Messiah. Very interesting popular presentations of some such view have appeared in modern times. When I was a student in Germany, about twenty years ago, everyone was reading Frenssen's *Hilfigenlei*, a novel which incidentally brings in a very interesting psychological reconstruction of Jesus. Jesus is represented as thinking about the Saviour that was to come, and at last He comes to the conclusion that He is that Saviour Himself. It is a very dramatic representation of the way in which He came to that conclusion—and it is also totally unconvincing. It does not make one bit of difference whether you put this acceptance of Messiahship at the baptism, or as many modern scholars have done, at some later time; whether you put it late or early it does—unless the claim was really justified—put a moral stain upon the character of Jesus. And that means putting a moral stain upon the character of a stainless One. Even modern men are forced to admit that as a whole the character of Jesus was totally inconsistent with any lack of mental balance. Thus at the very centre of the being of the reconstructed, purely human Jesus, there is a hopeless contradiction. The reduced Jesus of modern naturalism is a monstrosity, whereas the Jesus presented in the Gospels, though He is full of mystery,

is yet a person whom a man can love, and a person who might, by the wonderful grace of God, really have lived upon this earth.

That, then, is your second difficulty—your reconstructed Jesus is an unbelievable figure. Then there is a third difficulty. It is found when you raise the question how your purely human Jesus ever could have become a divine Jesus in the belief of the Church. Certainly that step must at least have been taken at a very early time. It is a very extraordinary thing how people can tell us in the modern Church that we have to take a reverse step, that we have to go back from the apostolic Church to Christ Himself. These modern men admit that in the early apostolic Church Jesus was made not merely the example for faith, but the object of faith. But it is said that Jesus did not present Himself in that way; He did not present Himself as an object of faith; and we have to reverse the step which was taken by the primitive apostolic Church and get back to the real Jesus! It does seem to be an extraordinary thing that you have the Christian Church appealing to Jesus of Nazareth and yet that the whole thing is found to be a total mistake, that the mistake was made at the very beginning, and that the whole power of the Church comes from that mistake! We have got to go back, we are told—back from the gospel which sets forth Jesus as Redeemer to the gospel which Jesus Himself preached. It is strange how people who say that seem to think they are bringing us nearer to Jesus. Constantly we hear it asked: "Why should we trouble ourselves with all this puzzling theology about the death of Christ and the resurrection? It is a barrier between us and Jesus. Even such of it as is presented by Paul and by the primitive Jerusalem Church must be wiped out; we must preach the gospel of Jesus instead of the gospel about Jesus."

But the gospel of Jesus, if that is all you have, does not mean that you have any close touch with Him. You can have a gospel of D. L. Moody, but not a gospel about him; a gospel of Paul, but not a gospel about him. "Was Paul crucified for you?" When we say we have a gospel about Jesus we mean that we have a gospel of which Jesus is not the mere author or proclaimer, but the very substance. Jesus proclaimed not only a gospel, but a gospel which had His own person in the centre of it. When you read the Gospels a little closer, you will find that everywhere Jesus presented Himself as a Saviour, not merely as a teacher or an example. If He did not present Himself as a Saviour, then His teaching is the most gloomy teaching that there ever was in this world. You may talk about the thunderings of Sinai. But what are they compared with the terrifying law of the Sermon on the Mount? How much higher, how much more terrible that is than the law that is set forth in the Old Testament! How shall we stand if only such persons as those whom Jesus there describes can come into the Kingdom of God? When you read the Sermon on the Mount, you are led straight to the foot of the Cross; if such be the law of God, you need Christ not merely as a Teacher but as a Saviour.

When we come to the Lord Jesus, let us not take Him as reconstructed for ourselves in a way after our own choosing, but let us receive the Lord

Jesus Christ "as He is offered to us in the Gospel." When we so receive Him, we have a wonderful confirmation of the documentary evidence. Possibly you may have a certain feeling of dissatisfaction with what I have been saying tonight; possibly you may feel that while we may argue about these intricacies of historical criticism, somehow what we want is immediacy of conviction with regard to Jesus. Well, you may have such immediacy of conviction, because by accepting this Gospel message you may come into living communion with Christ. But right there is where modern men go wrong. They say: "We have our communion with the living Christ, and so we do not care whether the Bible is true or not. We care nothing for the element of history in the Bible. The Bible is infallible only in the sphere of the inner life." That is very sad. It looks as though you had climbed up to the heights of Christian experience by means of the Bible, and when you are there you kick your ladder down, thus preventing others from coming up by it. But as a matter of fact the Bible is not a ladder but a foundation. Here is what Christian experience does: it does not give you Christ whether the Bible is true or not, but it is confirmatory evidence to show you that as a matter of fact the Bible is true. What I think we ought to be opposed to is a partial view of the evidences of Christianity. Let us not appeal to experience as over against the Bible; let us take along with the documentary evidence in the Gospels the great wealth of evidence that comes to us in other spheres, the evidence provided by the consciousness of sin, of the need of salvation, the need of a Saviour. Then we can come to the wonderful message of the gospel. It has then evidencing value enough. Accept it, and come to the feet of Jesus, and hear Him say to you, as you contemplate Him upon the Cross: "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."