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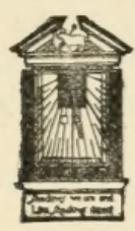
**THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST**

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# THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST

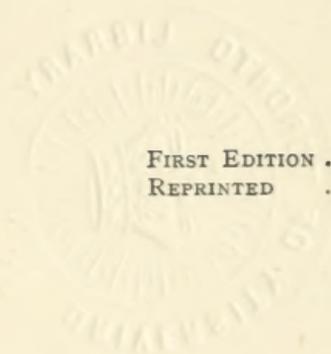
BY  
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TO THE KING'S WEIGH HOUSE CHURCH  
WHOSE LOYALTY TO ITS TRADITIONS OF LIBERTY  
ENABLED ME TO REDISCOVER  
THE FREEDOM  
OF  
THE CATHOLIC FAITH

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# THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST

## I

### INTRODUCTION

DURING recent years there has been a serious and sustained attempt to remove Christ from the position given to Him in the Christian scheme of things. This would not be remarkable in a world which is as yet unconvinced that the Christian faith is true. What is peculiar is that the attempt should be made within Christian circles, and with the avowed purpose of saving Christianity. Such an attempt is naturally met with the cry of treachery, and is traced to radical unbelief or wanton irresponsibility. But the situation cannot be met by such accusations, the movement is too serious to be turned by a mere reiteration of orthodoxy, and many of its exponents cannot be dismissed as wanting in sincerity, concern for true religion, or theological capacity. Insufficient allowance has been made for the sterility of confessional Chris-

tology which has obscured the person of Christ by a series of theological puzzles. To many earnest minds Christendom presents the appearance of maintaining a sort of Trust Deed allegiance to the Deity of Christ, while in practice refusing to admit His plainest teaching. Intense devotion to the person of Christ seems compatible with denying every principle by which He lived and for which He died. It is not remarkable that some impetuous souls should have assumed that the received theology was responsible for this inconsistency and should have genuinely believed that the restoration of Christ's simple teaching and ethical principles, in place of theological discussions concerning His Person and Work, would offer a real cure for the situation. So soon as the Creeds were dragged out of the sanctuary into the forum, every one could see that they were different from, if not inconsistent with, the Gospels, and the claim that a long chain of reasoning connected them and explained the development was received with impatience, especially when it was coupled with the suggestion that the lay mind and the amateur theologian were incapacitated from following or pronouncing upon the validity of the process. It was well known that there were philosophers, whose competence could not be denied, who were quite unimpressed with theological reasoning in general and

with Christological arguments in particular. It was also commonly reported that the criticism of the Gospels had entirely destroyed the premises from which this process claimed to start. Men whose learning was beyond cavil or dispute held that the Gospels themselves were an amalgam, composed of Christ's teaching and a superimposed theology of His Person ; acknowledged experts declared the portrait of Jesus impressed upon the pious reader of the Gospels to be composite ; while it was known that the efforts to discover the original and historical facts concerning Christ resulted in something either unimpressive or completely uncertain. Reference to personal conviction, devotional judgment, or the authority of the Church, seemed to be attempts to cloud the issues, and, in face of the perversion and apostasy which these things had sanctioned, could hardly expect to command respectful consideration.

It was all very well for ecclesiastical dogmatists to thunder anathemas and conservative theologians to polish epigrams, but the way of progress seemed to lie with those who were not afraid to make the facts known, and who were trying to show what materials still remained from which a reasonable faith, however depleted, might be constructed. These reconstructions were attempted along two divergent lines. There was

the teaching of the Gospels, rightly or wrongly ascribed to Christ. Its truth was entirely unaffected by any considerations as to its authorship. The conscience of the individual was the sole criterion of its value, and fidelity to these precepts the only thing that mattered. The personality of the Teacher was irrelevant to the truth of the teaching, and the true disciple need not concern himself about his personal relationship to the Master. It would naturally be one of admiration, or reverence, according to temperament, but this was not in any way a test or a means of salvation. Christianity was an ethical system; if religious at all, at most only theistic. All the problems about Christ's relation to God, man, or the world, were theological inventions, corrupting the simplicity of the faith and confusing the purely moral issues the Gospel raised.

This line was by no means a new one. The emphasis on the ethical side of Christianity had been continually made, as it could hardly fail to be with the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistle of James in the New Testament; though, save in Continental Socinianism and British Unitarianism, it had never been made exclusive. But the development of these movements in the past held out little promise for any further attempt along these lines, though the evangelical fervour, probably inherited from the older forms of faith, and the new social

passion of a few isolated persons professing attachment to liberal Christianity encouraged some to try.

But for a real modern, sensitive to the living movements of the age, a merely ethical Christianity was out of the question. To cut the religious and personal concern out of the New Testament entailed such a drastic surgery that the results were too ghastly for contemplation. Moreover, exclusively ethical movements and systems had been continually discovering their religious implications and awakening to their spiritual cravings and affinities. And, meanwhile, this ethical residuum of Christianity was now being ruthlessly attacked as no less untenable than the theological and religious systems which had once accompanied it. The altruistic motive of the Christian ethic was declared to be sentimental, the invitation to self-sacrifice an outrage upon the supreme right of personality, and its counsels of humility and submission disastrous in their retarding effect upon human progress. The only possible reply to such attacks was to point to the life and personality of Christ, which proved this condemnation of the Christian ethic to be due to misunderstanding and perversion. It was found that it needed the Heroic Figure to interpret the teaching; sundered from the Personality, the ethic was hardened into legalism in one direction and weakened into senti-

mentalism in the other. Only as the teaching of One who mastered life and dared everything was there retained the glorious freedom, the stinging challenge, the adventurous spirit of Christianity.

It was the other line which was somewhat newer and seemed more promising. Those of a more mystical temperament could not readily part with the religious consolation which had gathered round the figure of Christ. They felt the critical and historical difficulties in detail, but they sought the relief which comes from looking at rough outlines with half-closed eyes, and found a refuge in the vague suggestions of symbolism. As an historic figure Christ raised ethical and philosophical difficulties, but as the symbol of a universal idea these problems were transcended. Christ was taken to stand for God immanent in the world and incarnate in humanity, the Over-soul, the Other-self dimly discerned in introspection and faintly felt in silence. The historic life of Christ symbolised the development of the mystic experience as the Eternal was realised in time and the Infinite was embraced by the individual. To this view of things, Jesus was either a typical embodiment of the Christ-life, or a mythical personification of the Christ-idea. It mattered little how far the Gospels were historically true : they were eternally true. It did not even matter whether Jesus

ever existed : the Christ had been available in all ages, and wherever the heart knew its need He could be found. Thus we heard much of the inward, the eternal, the immanent Christ, and the authority of St. Paul was claimed for the idea that it was this, and not the historic Jesus, which was the source of salvation. It was thus thought possible to propound " Jesus " or " Christ " as a dilemma ; in face of the unmistakable declaration of the New Testament faith that they were one. Any attempt to show that in this suggested solution the word " Christ " was being used in a way which Jesus had alone made possible was received with impatience. Christ was regarded as a name of wider content than that of Jesus, and Jesus was only of significance in so far as the Christ dwelt in Him. It was obvious that the term Christ was being used as equivalent to the more unambiguous " Spirit of God " ; a fact which could sometimes be brought home by translating " Christ " back to its Hebrew original, " Messiah," which was immediately felt to be entirely unsuitable. But arguments were powerless against what was a feeling and a temper rather than a reasoned conviction, and it seemed best to wait until the ultimate tendency of this attitude was disclosed in the general process of thought or in the development of individual need. It was soon obvious that this cloudy Christ,

proposed as a centre of reconciliation, or as a point of departure from which reconstruction might be attempted, only concealed divergent convictions which soon began to manifest themselves in movements towards quite opposite directions. The name Christ had been made vague enough to stand for almost anything. With the one section it came to stand for the Inner Ideal, which, of course, varied enormously with different individuals. Slowly but surely this revealed itself to be nothing but a mystic self-deification, since the Ideal was regarded as self-created, and was obviously only subjective. We were back at a pure humanitarianism, and the retention of the name of Christ for this was seen to be mere traditionalism and a quite gratuitous cause of confusion. With another section "Christ" stood for the incarnation of God in humanity; but this showed such hostility to the idea of an historic incarnation that it was soon seen to be better described simply as idealism, or if it still held that a veritable incarnation of God took place in every individual who was aware of this process as the cause of his personality, the individual variety produced no identification of what sort of God was incarnating Himself; while, in moments of doubt or trial, the individual himself had not the faintest guarantee that he was not simply personifying his own thoughts and apotheosising his

most comforting ideas. However much this might satisfy a few peculiarly constructed persons, here was no source of strength or ground of agreement. It proved to be simply agnosticism baptised with a Christian name, and was merely confusing subjectivity with objectivity. These manifestations of the movement were disconcerting to those who, for very different reasons, had been attracted by the promise of breadth and reality. Their need was too clamant and their scepticism too vigorous to be satisfied with anything of this nature. Some fell back into hopeless confusion or blank unbelief ; but not all. Some who had learned much from liberalism were swift to discern that what gave meaning to the term " Christ " was due to the fact that it had been attached to Jesus of Nazareth, while, on the other hand, the confession that Jesus was the Christ suggested something far wider than any mere Messianic fulfilment, carried the idea that Jesus was somehow intimately connected with the strange sense of companionship almost every heart can feel, and was definitely revelative of the Incarnative purpose of God.

Now all this, as your consistently orthodox theologians were swift to point out, was a mere going into the fog in order to avoid definiteness, or at least a journeying round the world in order to get next door.

But for a great number of people, to see things through a fog was somewhat of a relief after the mathematical dogmatism and the angular theology which had done duty for the Christian faith. The very vagueness gave one the sense of contributing something, even if only from one's imagination; it seemed to magnify what looked too concretely temporal into the dimensions of something fairly cosmical, it gave to hard outlines a semblance of freedom and beauty. And to go round the world in order to get next door was, for many, the nearest way home, simply because between them and next door there had been erected a positively unclimbable wall. They came back richer for their wandering, with the comfort that they had come to conclusions only after having considered every other possibility, and with some assurance that they had been driven home; for they might have stopped on the way at many a proffered resting place had this not been forbidden by their need, but the very passion that set them forth on their search carried them further on.

It is as one who, at least in sympathy, has tried the long way round, that the writer endeavours to tell how he came back home by what seems to him an absolutely inevitable way, and in the hope that he may help those who have dared a like freedom of exploration to see the path they must travel stretching clearer before

them and to urge them more swiftly to the goal. It is the writer's conviction that for many to-day the longest way round is still the only way home. After their experience they may find themselves in unexpected sympathy with those who have never stirred from home, or if they have, manage to conceal or forget it. One has a certain consolation not only in being able to retain sympathy with those who are still struggling on behind, and to be patient with those who are determined still to set out for themselves, but still more that one comes home with an apparently greater fellow feeling for all who have finally arrived. One finds that it is a very catholic home of souls to which one returns, and one is able to get into brotherly relations not only with the elder brother, but with those with whom, for all their long residence in the same home, the elder brother still seems to be in rather imperfect sympathy; and one can look back on all the way, which was sometimes very dark and very lonely, with the knowledge that the way as well as the goal was Christ.

It is in the light of a long look round, as one who has fared forth freely, looked into not a few bottomless pits, made mistakes and found it out, taken turnings, and finding they led nowhere, come back to the main road again, that the necessity of Christ is here set forth

in a way which may help those to whom it is impossible to conceive that the modern day has any worse light for our seeing than those that have preceded it. It may help some past awkward turnings, perhaps encourage others to go on to the end where they might otherwise say, "This is good enough for me," urge that one more step be taken where some are tempted to give up in despair. The various approaches to the subject will not appeal equally to all; the chapter on the necessity of Christ to thought may be rather too difficult for some to attempt and some might prefer to leave it till the last. But it is in the conviction that all roads lead home, if only you go on far enough, and do not cheat yourself with thinking you have arrived when you know you have not, or by trying to feel homelike when the heart is aching; it is in this conviction that the whole has been written. To some the argument, even taken as a whole, may not appear convincing. To such it is no empty advice to take a year or two over it, watch the movements of thought around you, explore more deeply your own need. Many will feel that this or that particular presentation of Christ is unnecessary. To such it may be remarked that most of the difficulties our age has found in Christ have been due to mistaken efforts to reduce Him to the need of a particular generation or a particular type of mind.

None but the whole Christ will satisfy our whole humanity ; and if we ourselves have found anything answering to our own need in Him, that gives us little right to deny the existence in Him of elements which at present we do not feel we need, but which others obviously do. He will be the answer to all only by being the answer to each.



## II

### THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO THOUGHT

A GENERATION ago, a complete deadlock seemed to have been reached between science and religion, between philosophy and Christianity, and it was generally assumed that if religion was ever going to gain a hearing again, it would have to square with the conclusions of science, and if Christianity held any truth at all, it would be philosophy that would decide what it was, and philosophy that would have to provide its more adequate expression. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the change that has since taken place. Of the conflict between science and religion we now hardly hear anything, largely because both sides have been taken up rather with a re-examination of their own basis. On the whole, science now declines to pronounce on ultimate questions. The final explanations of existence and life which it was thought lay in the ultimate analysis of matter or in the idea of evolution are now seen to be no explanations at all. The matter to which everything was being reduced has turned out to be the greatest of all mysteries, and what we thought to be the end of physical research, namely, the atom, is dis-

covered to be a microcosmic world whose exploration is only just beginning. Evolution, once hailed as the key which would open any lock, is now discerned to be not so much an explanation as that which stands in greatest need of explanation ; it is not the key so much as the lock. That one thing should become another, by however slow a process, is discovered on further consideration to be the supreme mystery, and a mystery which the *fact* of evolution shows to be omnipresent and the characteristic of life. Science has not explained, it has only described, and that in terms which may be suitable for diagrams, experiments, and successful inventions, but which threw no light at all on ultimate problems. Meanwhile religion had, in many quarters, been hastily cut down to meet the demands of science, had been purged of all miracle and mystery, and the working of God in history and the human heart reduced in strict accordance with natural laws. And now suddenly, not only was it found that natural laws were merely abstract generalisations which were by no means self-explanatory, but science venturing to examine the areas which religion under pressure had abandoned, such as healing-miracles, answers to prayer, belief in the soul, began to discover that there was really a quite considerable scientific basis for these things in mental suggestion, telepathy, and psychologi-

cal research. The effect has been rather to rehabilitate faith in an omnipresent and transcendent power as the source and support of all existence, as well as to re-establish confidence in the general trustworthiness of religious documents which recorded that times of great awakening were accompanied by the display of unusual control over the natural order.

During this same period philosophy was criticising its own basis and examining its own canons, and was discovering that it was doubtful whether such a thing as pure Reason really existed or was ever operative, and that the intellect was only fitted to give an abstract and static picture of reality, and was therefore constitutionally incompetent to comprehend life and vitality, so that if truth lay anywhere, it was not in philosophical statements, but in life and personality. Indeed, so violent is the change, that at present there is almost a tendency for thought, whether operating upon the material world, as in science, or on the mental world, as in philosophy, to be paralysed by the new situation. A new basis for thought must be found if it is to recover validity, for it is now clear that when we believed that we were resting on axioms we were making the most extraordinary assumptions, and when we thought we had reached an explanation we had only come face to face with that which had to be

explained. It almost looks as if science and philosophy will have to turn to religion to see if that can provide them with the basis they need.

We have, therefore, moved far from the ground on which the old conflict took place, and the reconciliations that were proposed on the basis of a strict division of territory are no longer necessary to consider. We need not discuss the scholastic solution that religion rests on faith in revelation while philosophy proceeds on reason and ratiocination. There is no such clear division. We shall not rest in the reverent agnosticism which holds that science deals with phenomena by observation while religion deals with the transcendent by some more mystical process. Neither shall we accept the proffered help of Pragmatism, which, alarmed at the bankruptcy of philosophy, proposes a practical rather than a theoretical test for truth, a test which religion has had again and again to ignore. We are going to show that the apparently paradoxical claim of the title of this chapter is strictly true, namely, that Christ is necessary to thought, or, to put it in a more general way: that philosophy depends upon Christianity being true, and reason all along assumes what religion reveals. The position is not, therefore, that faith must await intellectual confirmation, but rather that intellect all along proceeds by means of faith, which,

if rejected, discredits every intellectual process, and that philosophy everywhere indirectly testifies to the necessity of Christ.

This position is so unusual that we must promise at the outset that it shall be worked out only on the strictest intellectual lines ; but to justify the demand this will make on the reader, it may be well to recall the fact that there have been times in the past when this connection between thought and Christ was distinctly recognised. The popular evangelical presentation of Christianity has concealed from our generation its profound philosophical implications, though the fact ought to have been more widely known, that unfettered philosophy had not only, as in Kant and Hegel, paid a tribute to Christianity and recognised it as a sort of unconscious philosophy, but in more recent times has been compelled to admit that philosophy is simply abstract Christianity. We still need to be reminded that Christianity was not born into a barbaric and uncultured age, and although it is only a very simple and intensely personal embodiment of ideas, it was hailed by men trained in the finest systems of Greek philosophy to be, not only philosophically true, but the true philosophy. The Nicene controversy on the Person of Christ may appear to be irrelevant to a modern, who is inclined to be mentally impatient, but

he ought to remember that Nicene Christology was an attempt to express the significance of Christ in terms of Greek thought ; and the inadequacy of the result, if inadequate it be, is due, not so much to the inadequacy of Christ to the terminology, as to the inadequacy of the terminology to Christ. The Christian faith appropriated the Logos philosophy, the supreme attainment of Greek thought, and completely exhausted it in attempting to make it explain Christ ; that is the real situation. When we come to the next great age of philosophic thought, namely, to the time of the Schoolmen, our distaste for subtlety again inclines us to underestimate the tremendous mental stature and acumen of some of these men, to overlook the debt which our wonderful success in science owes to the perfecting of the rational instrument by the scholastic discipline, and, therefore, to fail to appreciate the significance of the fact that these minds found in Christian doctrine something which not only held their adoration, but provided ample scope for the exercise of their acute and subtle intellects. It would be rather surprising if our age, on the whole not eminently philosophical, should be proved right in dismissing Christianity as unrelated to ultimate problems. It is more likely that our present difficulties are due to the merely practical interests which tend to make even the asking, not to speak of the solving, of

ultimate questions appear meaningless. Our dismissal of Christianity may turn out to be due rather to superficiality than to profundity. There are obviously considerations here which demand a reopening of the question.

Before we come to the heart of the problem it might be well to look a little more closely at the present development of philosophy, for it offers a most striking testimony to the philosophic intuition of the Christian faith. The last great dominant system had been that of Hegel. This had interpreted reality wholly in terms of thought, and yet with a somewhat ambiguous result, as subsequent discussion showed. For it was not clear whether it implied that reality, ourselves included, was simply the thought of God, with no real independent existence, or whether the Absolute Reality was simply our thought, when it looked as if we were the real creators of the world. The rational dialectic led to the conception of an Absolute Idea, complete, static, and not really needing any further manifestation, whence it was exceedingly difficult to conceive how the world and ourselves ever came into existence; or if it worked back to our own ideas as really absolute, then it carried with it the suggestion that there could be nothing evil, but simply thinking made it so, and all we had to do was to look at things from the right angle. This view

of reality as mere Idea at length brought forth the boisterous protest of Pragmatism that Idealism had reduced time and the world to hallucination, left to man only a passive reflection of the thought of God, and encouraged acquiescence in the remediable evils of the world. Although Pragmatism has proved much stronger in criticism than in construction, and in its revolt to the notion that truth is not a mere copy of pre-existing reality but creates reality, has betrayed itself into an impossible position, yet it has led to some further progress. What has been established is that pure reason is an impossible abstraction from the unity of personality, which also embraces feeling and will ; with the result that unified personality rather than cogent dialectic is seen to be the fullest embodiment of truth, a conclusion of the profoundest value for the interpretation of reality and our relation thereto.

Now the Hegelian philosophy had affirmed that it was a philosophical confirmation of the Christian religion, but it left the Christian claim of an incarnation in time somewhat under suspicion as being only a crude representation of the Eternal Idea, and an incarnation in a particular personality only a drama of a wider process. Redemption, again, was bound to be considered not as an historic act or a change wrought in personality, so much as the attaining of a true idea of

God, the world, and oneself ; in short, redemption was a ransom from illusion. It did not take long to discover that this supposed support of Christianity really excluded any real Incarnation or redemptive act. Christ became a mere symbol, and this led to the neglect of His person and encouraged the tendency to deny His historicity. And yet this seemed the natural conclusion of rational idealism.

Added to the criticism of Pragmatism, there has now come the somewhat sketchy suggestion of Bergson that the static conception of reality to which absolute idealism always leads is due to the purely intellectual character of the construction, and, since the intellect is an instrument evolved, not for dealing with living ideas, but with inert matter and abstract notions gathered therefrom, it is absolutely unreliable for solving problems of life and movement. Therefore, to obtain an understanding of reality, we must take something beside intellect, namely, intuition. Bergson can hardly tell us what this intuition is, but it is obviously something very like what religion calls faith.

Without by any means committing ourselves to the Pragmatic or Bergsonian systems we may take courage from their criticism to approach our problem more nearly. If we feel, after prolonged thought, that Christianity is contradictory to reason, it may be that

we have misunderstood Christianity. That is more than likely, but it would still be a very unwise course to propose, therefore, that we should try to make Christianity square with our reason. We have seen how mistaken that has proved to be. But neither are we going to propose that reason must be squared with everything that is affirmed to be Christianity. It may be that there is also some misunderstanding as to what reason is. If therefore we find a deadlock in our minds when we endeavour to understand Christianity, it is a good thing to hark back a bit and inquire what this reason is to which Christianity appears difficult.

Now it is generally assumed that reason is a faculty which owes nothing to faith. On the contrary, philosophy cannot move a step without making a great venture of faith; and it matters not what type of philosophy it be. If, in order to construct the real universe, the thinker withdraws from the outside world and engages himself purely with the dialectic of his own reason after the strict idealist method, he can bring no proof to show that these dialectical processes are valid for the attainment of the truth. The only thing he can affirm is that he is bound to think in this way, and can think in no other. It is not that suspicion is aroused by the fact that the strictest rationalists come to quite different conclusions about reality, for few rationalists

bother themselves much with any other reasoning but their own ; for even if reason always led to identical conclusions, that would give no proof that reason itself was true. Indeed, even if we are allowed to compare our conclusions with the world without, the suspicion still remains that idealism works so splendidly because its processes are never really checked by anything but the mind, which happens to work in just that way. The " scepticism of the instrument," as this is called, the suspicion that what we call reason is simply the way the brain is by its constitution compelled to work, no doubt tends to paralyse all thought, but it is a suspicion which, once raised, cannot be easily dismissed, and a vigorous idealism often only serves to call it forth. On the other hand, the realist who regards the external world as the only reality, of which his thoughts are simply a material effect, not only can never show that idealism is not equally true—for after all the realist is not dealing directly with things, but with their effect on his own mind—but neither can he claim immunity from the scepticism which suggests that the fatal facility of his system is due to the fact that the system simply agrees with its own product. It is only a case of consistency ; it is not confirmation.

What gives much more assurance of the possibility of our minds attaining truth is the coincidence of two

systems, namely, the system of things with the system of thought. For this, we must believe that there *are* two systems. And even a temporary lack of correspondence between the two, or a discovered error, helps to breed confidence that we are not simply following our own shadows. Kant assumed the existence of two different systems, namely, the processes of thought, and things as they are in themselves; but denied that thought could ever penetrate beyond phenomena, that is, things as they appear to us, or could attain to the noumena, that is, things as they are in themselves. The criticism of this rigorous dualism, from the idealist standpoint, is that Kant *assumes* that there is a transcendent reality while at the same time affirming that we can know nothing about it. But this is hardly the baseless assumption that it appears to be. Experience rests upon the fact of continual friction between our thought and things. The existence of error, pain, sin, reveals to us a certain hiatus between these two worlds, and therefore reveals that there are two worlds. The sense of a lack of correspondence, harmony, fitness is the great characteristic of all thoughtful persons.

Now the great problem is how to bridge over the differences between these two worlds. To argue that there are not two, but one, is to deny the most immediate fact of experience, and it is an attempt which can

never be carried through. We can attempt to do so by reducing our spiritual aspirations to the level of the external world as revealed to us by scientific research, which in some quarters a few years ago was confidently reported to contain no indication of freedom, immortality, or God. But then the existence within of these strange ideas all the more needs to be explained, since on the naturalistic hypothesis they are merely the inner effect of the real outer world. If, on the other hand, we are to maintain that the only real world is that which corresponds to the ideal, then we rule out the apparent facts of error, imperfection, and sin as non-existent ; to the outrage of all moral judgment. If we are going to think at all we must assume that there is a difference between the ideal and the real, but also that there is something that connects and explains both. That something must obviously be higher than and prior to both, and the ground from which they take their rise ; for the lower could not explain the higher, neither does one rise logically from the other. Now this assumption that there are two worlds and that they are connected by something higher is one that is made in every act of thought, and without it we could not think at all. And it is an assumption of faith. That is to say, it is one that we are bound to make from the very constitution of our nature, and one which, without

making, we cannot stir a step. And what it implies is almost entirely similar to the verdict of religion, which finds the only solution of the actual world and man's aspiration in the thought of God. Religion therefore only makes explicit what thought implies in every step it takes. And since faith in God involves communion with His will and a dedication to His purpose, the solution arrived at by religion is an active one, which changes both our inner attitude and outward conditions; whereas all philosophical solutions tend to passivism. It cannot be denied that here philosophy appears to be simply abstract religion, and unconsciously assumes the truth which religion realises.

This is all confirmed again, if we go on to inquire how it is that we arrive at a sense of difference between the ideal and the real worlds. It is obvious that the ideal is not produced by mere contrast with the real. It cannot be the mere product of our own thinking, for we are conscious of this imperfection, error, and sin even in ourselves. It can only be that we are in contact with a world from which we derive our ideals and in the light of which the real world seems unideal. Nor can this ideal world be explained as the mere logical negation of the finite, temporal, and imperfect world, for the ideas of infinity, eternity, and perfection cannot be derived from their opposite, for that opposite would

never be so judged, save by contrast with something that transcends them. The shadows can only be made visible by light. Thus, in a negative way, thought assumes the infinite, the eternal, the perfect as the background of all its judgments, and yet what is thus assumed is not itself negative, but positive. Thought therefore assumes what religion worships. It has been held, however, that although the infinite is itself positive we can never get beyond a mere negative idea of it. It is here that religion advances a stage further by taking the contrast in a serious moral fashion, and by a deepened sense of sin gains a vivid consciousness of what causes the sense of sin, realises in the very sense of sin the operation of God's presence, a presence which continues despite sin, and is therefore forgiving; a forgiveness which deepens the sense of sin and calls to holiness, and is therefore a redemptive forgiveness. Here again, religion makes explicit and positive what philosophy negatively implies, and at this point the Christian conception of God as forgiving and redeeming is seen to be the real basis of all thought.

The final and most momentous disclosure of the implicit assumption of Christianity in every act of thought arises from the discovery that in attempting to picture that which lies beyond the ideal and the real, and which is both their ground and the hope of their

final reconciliation, there is no possibility of confining the construction to what is called pure reason.

It is generally assumed that reason is a faculty which only works purely when purged from every stain of emotion. Reason must be calm, cool, disinterested, and unswayed by personal feeling. It seems also to be assumed, with even less cause, that the only trustworthy results of reasoning must be of the same variety, rather chilly and uninteresting, and indeed in complete contradiction to all human hopes and desires. Now it can be shown quickly and simply that reason is not this unemotional thing. Before we seek for truth at all, we must have the desire to do so. It must be a strong personal desire, it must be a very great persuasion with us, for it is notorious that many people are without it. This very process of reasoning is therefore set in motion by feeling, and needs a very strong feeling to keep us at the arduous task. And the process of reasoning is itself shot through with feeling. When we argue from a premise to a conclusion there is nothing by which we can prove that the process is itself valid save that we feel it to be so, and feel it irresistibly. But this means that it is a feeling process all through. And the test of truth is always a sort of feeling. It is frequently alleged against religion, and especially against Christianity, that it takes hopes for the truth and comforting ideas

for facts. But the attainment of truth is tested in a very similar way. It is when we get harmony, rest, unity, wholeness, a coincidence between the facts our observation reports and the process our reasoning leads to that we feel we are at the truth. But this is again fundamentally a feeling, and even a feeling of satisfaction and comfort. The attainment of perfect truth would be accompanied by perfect comfort, for it would be the fulfilment of the desire which set us out upon our search.

It is therefore the whole mind—feeling, thought, and will—which must be engaged in the search for truth : the demand that any one of these must be cut out in order to find the truth is simply impossible. And this involves our faith in the totality of the human constitution and its unification as the great test of truth. Therefore truth can only be adequately expressed by us in a completely harmonised personality, and unless therefore ultimate reality is itself personal there is no possibility of ourselves, intensely personal as we are, mirroring reality at all. We can only fully comprehend what is personal, only enter into full relationship with personalities. And so in every exercise of thought we are implicitly assuming that personality is the ultimate reality, and personal adjustments and personal relationship the real clue to existence. This brings us very close to the Christian faith in God the Father and

enables us to understand the claim, as no other age could, that the Truth, that is, the Image of God, must be a Person also.

But all this line of argument, striking as it is, still only brings us to the admission that religion, philosophy, and science rest on the same assumption, an assumption without which they can neither exist nor move. But because the whole of our mental structure subsists on this necessary assumption, that is, rests on faith, that does not prove that the assumption is true; even though we can do nothing unless we do assume it to be true. Scepticism has the right to suggest that the total basis of our life may be invalid, however impossible the position that would create. For even if life could bring no other proof, this ultimate scepticism only arises because we have a longing for a better proof, and an idea that it might exist. What would suffice for confirmation then? It would be the revelation that within the conditions of earthly life, with its mixture of the mental and the physical and the penetration of intellect by feeling, we could have a Personality who was the incarnation of the Infinite in the finite, the Eternal in the temporal, God in man. Christianity claims that this revelation has actually been made; that in One who was truly man the Personality of God has been revealed; in One who shared all the infirmities of our flesh the

glory of God was seen ; in One who was mentally compassed as we are with the limitation of humanity, the Truth was embodied ; in Christ the two worlds, the transcendent and the temporal, are reconciled. That this claim of Christianity is true has to be shown by other means, but it is an astonishing fact that all this was recognised to be the significance of Christ long before men saw how necessary Christ was, not only for personal salvation and divine revelation, but as the confirmation of those assumptions on which all thought had to rest. Hence the choice of the Greek term Logos as one of the earliest attempts to find a category for Christ ; for He is the underlying Reason, that which is at once the heart of God and the core of the world. Christ is therefore the ultimate necessity, the fundamental datum, and the final validation of thought.



### III

## THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO RELIGION

MOST people claim to be religious now-a-days. But it is an attitude which frequently refuses to identify itself with any religion in particular, and especially does it desire to distinguish itself from the acceptance of any and all theology. Yet even this attitude constitutes a considerable advance upon that which prevailed in similar quarters a generation ago, when it was still the fashion to look upon religion as a priestly invention or an irrational and pernicious delusion. It would therefore be useful to inquire what this new type of religion is and how it has come to be adopted. It is religion without an object, religion almost entirely subjective. For we exclude from our consideration those who declare that art, or philosophy, or socialism is their religion; since these are rather in the nature of substitutes for religion. This new confession, however, claims to possess a genuine spiritual experience, definite religious consciousness, and to constitute the vital and essential part out of which all religious systems have been constructed. It is, therefore, when analysed, a feeling, or rather a series of feelings, which

are admittedly religious. The feelings most frequently claimed are those of reverence and awe, often of oneness and harmony, sometimes of deep peace and ecstatic joy. The peculiarity of this religious feeling, however, is that it is not referred to any definite, or at least adequate, source or object. Indeed to endeavour to trace it to any source, or to argue from it to any cause, is dismissed as illegal and mistaken. For these feelings can be induced by lonely communion with nature, by sympathetic contact with one's fellows, or even by entirely subjective processes like silence, concentration, or deep breathing ; but it is not allowable to argue that nature, or humanity, or the soul, are the sources or objects of these feelings. The feeling is the ultimate thing. With less rigorous minds it may be permissible to employ semi-objective terms like the All, the Life-Force, Spirit, the Over-Soul, even God, used vaguely ; but these are entirely symbolic and must not be thought of as something apart from oneself. To theologise from these feelings is strictly prohibited as a form of mendacity. And yet it is not wherein these feelings are different from those found in objective religious systems or based upon theological dogmas that is emphasised by those who take this position ; they are all for sympathy and inclusiveness, because they believe that they possess the living substance of

religion, of which all systems and definite beliefs are but the external supports and suggestive symbols. Indeed they are willing to borrow the language of theological systems and use the rites and ceremonies of ancient faiths, on the understanding that the purely subjective interpretation is the psychologically true one. But if free to choose, then concentration, which is rather an effort to get beyond thought than to bring thought to bear upon any particular object, silence, and music are recommended as the most suitable aids to deep religious feeling.

In the present distracted state of the world in matters religious and philosophical no one would want to pour contempt upon these methods, or to deny that to many minds they can bring some measure of consolation and calm. It might be condemned as illegitimate and even deceptive to steal the terms of Christian theology, while denying their reference; to practise Catholic customs while refusing to consider their intention; to adopt the processes of mediaeval mysticism while rigidly rejecting the purpose which welcomed them; but a more generous view would hardly grudge what penumbral light can be obtained without endangering weak eyes by tracing it to its burning centre. If people can really obtain these gifts of peace and calm, enter thus far into the effects of religious experience, who

would wish to exclude any one from them ? Moreover we cannot do so. What such souls gain must be true so far as it goes, and if their attempt to separate the subjective from the objective is impossible, they will surely find it to be unsatisfying, and so be forced to complete the circle. What we have to notice is that this attitude, perverse as it may seem, is an advance, if only to a half-way house ; it is a restoration of sight, if only to that stage where one beholds men as trees walking. Those who have come thus far may one day go further. It is more profitable to inquire why this attitude has come to supplant the older suspicion of religion as invented and pernicious ; and whether this subjective half can be maintained, but does not rather involve the full Christian solution.

The changed attitude to religion is undoubtedly due partly to a deeper culture. We say culture rather than knowledge, though more accurate knowledge of man's incurably religious nature has played a great part in effecting the change. But culture implies a sympathy in addition to knowledge : the desire to enter into a completer understanding of the ancient feelings and universal cravings of humanity. The idea that religion was the invention of priests, who saw power and riches in it, is one that obviously does not take us back to an origin at all. If religion was an invention, it met with

a wonderful response, and if it was profitable to its priestly promulgators, it was so simply because it met a great need. We should still need to explain man's predilection for religion. But a very little research shows that religion existed long before priests of any kind. Originally every man was his own priest. What we do discover is that the farther back we can penetrate the more universal and natural does religion become. It is characteristic of primitive man, and it is the most primitive thing about him. It cannot be traced to anything beyond itself; on the contrary, most of the ideas and institutions of humanity have to be traced to it. Religion cannot possibly have originated in false reasoning, for it existed before man was capable of reasoning at all. What is oldest in religion is not theology or speculation of any kind, but ceremonies. We can tell from monuments and myths, from the persistence of the same ceremonies with differing interpretations, that the rite was the most primitive expression of religion, and that the rite was originally performed long before any explanation of it was demanded or thought of. The explanation of the rite was an afterthought, was frequently mistaken, and sometimes was sheer invention. The rite was really meaningless. What was also universally characteristic of these rites was that they were communal; every one took part

in them. Religion was originally social, not individual. Now it is to the primitive ceremony that we can trace the rise of some of the most important branches of human activity and expression. It gave birth to the social sense and it was the mother of all the arts. This may be seen from the fact that both these things originally explained themselves as religious. Men felt that they owed a duty to one another because they believed that they were descended from the same divine ancestor or had been banded together simply in order to support the same worship. All art originally served a religious purpose.

It is easy to see how these things were created by communal ceremonial. It was because the ceremonies had to be performed by all that men felt themselves to be members one of another. Even down till recent times absence from public worship has been felt to be anti-social and therefore an offence which the community had the right to punish. And the ceremonies themselves gave rise to the dance, the drama, music, and eventually to sculpture and painting. It is a confirmation of this essential connection that the decay of religion is often accompanied by the decline of social obligation and nearly always leads to the decadence of the arts. So impressed are anthropologists with these discoveries that they have become enthusiastic

for the revival of communal and ceremonial religion as essential to the welfare and progress of human society. To be irreligious is to cut oneself off from the roots of human progress : it is to be really anti-social and inhuman. But it must be a thoroughly primitive religion that is to be revived, a religion of feeling and expression, before it is tainted with theories and theologies. Here is the anthropological sanction for the modern desire for a religion without an object. Therefore the modern pilgrimage must be a movement from theology to religion, by which is meant, though more delicately expressed, a religion without God. Religion must be revived and this is the only form acceptable to the modern mind.

It can hardly be expected that this proposal will be welcome to many religious people. The danger of a religion which begins and ends in mere feeling is one of which history has sufficiently emphasised ; and if there is anything that a vigorous religion fears more than another it is subjectivity. The history of religion is really little more than a search for an Object worthy of man's love and devotion. To present man with a looking-glass will certainly not meet the case. However fierce a man's need for religion is, indeed just because it is so tremendous, the proposal of any substitute will arouse instant suspicion and

be as fiercely repudiated, however dark the alternative be.

But granted the facts that have been disclosed by research, does the character of primitive religion and the significance of its development sanction this attempt at pure subjectivity? Despite the inability of primitive man to explain why he felt it necessary to take part in certain ceremonies, it is clear enough to us now what they really meant. The early communal religious ceremonies were, in the main, of two kinds: one is obviously an imitation of the processes of nature, and the other centres round the important events of human life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, death. To take the nature ceremonies first:—These accompanied such events as the procession of the sun across the sky, the vitalising of vegetation in the spring, and its dying down in the autumn; and these events were celebrated with suitable ceremonial, either joyful or mournful. It was a sense of sympathy with nature and of union with its life that must have prompted these obviously mimetic ceremonies. Although it is less easy to explain the rites which accompany the great events of human life, they evidently express the sense of mystery and importance which they held for man. These ceremonies were, therefore, a response to something perfectly objective, namely, nature and human

life. Yet it is not proposed by the new enthusiasts for primitive religion, as we might expect, that we should worship nature : that has been tried before, and for all its attraction found impossible to sustain. Moreover any object of worship is distinctly repudiated. But this is really altering one of the creative factors of primitive religion, for the feelings it is proposed to revive were nothing else than emotional reactions to something quite objective. It is endeavoured to justify this one-sided adaptation of primitive religion on the plea that, while the religious feelings have remained almost unchanged, the conception of the object to which they have been referred has been in almost continuous evolution. But why should the modern faith in evolution be repudiated at this point, and the development in the conception of the object not be given due weight as a gradual and valid excogitation of man's response ? Probably because this would lead to that personal and theological religion which it is specially desired to avoid ; but ostensibly because the very first movement towards explanation is held to be definitely mendacious or deceived. It would seem that a time arrived when a generation arose which began to ask awkward questions. Children wished to know why it was essential to take part in these ceremonies which no doubt they sometimes found uninteresting. The

parents had no answer to give because they themselves did not really know. The question had never occurred to them. But children must be answered, and the answer developed took two forms, probably successively. The earliest answer would appear to have taken the form of what we call sympathetic magic. If men did not rise to sing and dance the sun would not rise : if they did not weep and mourn the rain would not fall. The ceremonies were not imitations of nature : they were the cause of nature's activity. It is this answer which explains the early connection of religion and magic, as well as the probability that religion preceded magic. But this explanation is one that could not survive daring experiment, and gradually it had to be abandoned.

The next explanation was that of the myth. The myth is simply the ceremony translated into a story ; a story of heroic or romantic adventure. This at first may seem an incredibly simple theory, but examination shows that the clue can be applied everywhere. The whole of the beautiful Greek myths only tell in personal form the story of natural processes like the movements of the sun and the rise and decay of vegetation. They were elaborated with picturesque incidents on the lips of successive generations of story-tellers, and decorated by a true poetic instinct, but this was their origin and

their still discernible motive. A similar clue unlocks the mystery of Egyptian or Hindu mythology. And this excuses in part the apparent licentiousness of some of the myths. The incestuous marriages and the sensual amours of the gods, which so aroused the wrath of Plato, were originally quite innocent ; for they only referred to the marriage of heaven and earth, the rain piercing the soil and the sun ripening the corn, which brought forth the plenty that sustained human life. With the rise of the myth explanation, the ceremonies were to be performed to please the deities into which they had been personified, and to obtain their gifts. And the ceremony gradually therefore assumed the form of a sacred drama. Now this personification was in its actual form absolutely untrue. There are no such persons as Adonis, Isis, Tammuz. The myth therefore starts out on a track of mendacity, of which, so the anthropologist enthusiasts of primitive religion hold, the most advanced theology is only the direct and still unreliable product.

But this sweeping indictment really begs the question, and is as invalid as the attempt to represent this primitive religion as wholly subjective. It may turn out that nature cannot be ultimately explained without tracing everything to some personal force behind it all. At any rate, man early discerned that none but persons

were worthy of his worship, for impersonal nature was not even equal to himself. And behind the whole movement of explanation we have quite startling evidence that there was some mind at work greater than the mind of man. The rites which accompanied the events of birth, puberty, etc., seem absolutely meaningless, and we can hardly ever detect the cause of their having been adopted. They seem entirely superstitious. Yet it is now recognised that many of the apparently irrational *tabus* of savage practice have been of the greatest hygienic and prophylactic value. It is from them indeed that there has developed our modern medical science. And when this fact is pondered it enormously confirms our faith in the control and guidance of a Mind which could see the end from the beginning, and which was teaching man through such means as he could appreciate in his lowly state. So some of the best human institutions and customs have been supported by the most ridiculous reasons, and many silly superstitions have served a real purpose. If we are going to say that the theology constructed from man's reason and experience has no value because its first attempt was the myth, we might as well go on to say that medicine is useless because it originally believed in magic. Having allowed that the primitive religious feeling was of permanent value, despite many

evils with which it was mixed, nothing can prohibit our regarding the whole of man's religion as of at least similar value.

Many minds, and not a few modern movements, are prepared to go further on this very basis. In the mythology of all the religions they see a beautiful meaning, an endeavour on the part of the human mind to respond to the touch of the Divine Spirit. These myths really disclose to the instructed the processes by which the human soul and the Divine Spirit are united in a more fruitful life. It was this union which was set forth in the Greek mysteries, which in turn go back to the older myths and the still older ceremonies. These set forth dramatically, and perhaps even conveyed sacramentally, the great experience of union with the Divine. They, of course, must not be taken literally. There are no such persons, and they had no such adventures, but they set forth processes in the soul, and by this setting forth actually induced them. Here is the esoteric secret of all religious mythology, sacraments, and doctrines. With this interpretation the great classics of Christian mysticism can be appreciated, the great Christian doctrines understood, and the great Christian sacraments appropriated. What is wrong is to imagine that mysticism is dependent upon the special apparatus of Christian devotion, that the

Christian doctrines are founded on historic facts or refer to *acts* of redemption, or that the Christian Eucharist has any more validity than the Mithraic sacramental meal. The same passionate devotion can be found in the ecstasies of Neo-Platonism or the mystical works of Sufism. God, the Other with which the soul comes in contact, need not be conceived as by Christianity, not even as personal. Christian mysticism is only a branch of universal mysticism, distinguished only by a difference of terminology, which may be adopted or not, purely by temperamental choice or because one has been brought up to it. Any other religious terminology would do just as well if it fitted in more easily with our habits and customs. The processes of Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Union can be gone through without tying oneself down to the Christian system. It is not what one meditates or concentrates upon, but the practices themselves which matter. The whole of Christian mysticism can be lifted out of its doctrinal setting without the loss of anything of value. Similarly with the Christian religion as a whole. It is only one interpretation of universal religion, and has special claims only upon those who find that their upbringing and their environment make this the easiest way for them to travel. The great Christian doctrines of repentance and regeneration can

be appropriated without believing that God was incarnate and suffered in Christ in order to effect these changes in the soul. The idea of an incarnate and suffering Saviour-God is, indeed, to be found in all religions. As ideas which are to be realised by the soul they are of supreme value : as events which took place in history and were necessary to accomplish redemption they are narrow and misleading. Sometimes this position is prepared to stake everything on the theory that the story of Jesus Christ is as much a myth as the story of Demeter and Persephone, but more frequently it is content to regard the Gospel as a personification of soul-processes, the person Himself having no further purpose or value for devotion. Anyhow, the historicity of the Gospel is irrelevant. The Christ who saves is not a person in time, but a spirit in the heart.

We shall have to examine the myth hypothesis as applied to Christianity more closely later on. What has to be said here is that the placing of Christianity among the myths, and the dismissal of the person of Christ as unessential, contain unrecognised but most serious consequences for the whole of religion. It is certainly a most remarkable thing that myths which are simply poetic personifications of natural processes should bear a similarity to the great events of the career ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth, and that the doctrines

of Christianity should have been so wonderfully anticipated in the ideas of pagan religion. The similarities have often been most unfairly exaggerated ; but admitting such likenesses as need not be denied, what is the explanation ? There are really only two alternatives open. One is that the human heart, helped by hints in nature, and moved by the mystery of life, sighed after a manifestation of God in human form as the only real assurance and the one need of redemption, and so men evolved the ceremony and invented the myths. And this was possible and came so near to the real thing because the Word which became flesh was also the Word through which the worlds were made, because God was preparing in all minds for what He was going to accomplish, lighting all hearts in order that they might recognise the Light when He came into the world. But if, on the other alternative, Christ is only one more myth, another personification of ideas, then this craving remains still unsatisfied. God has never been born as we are born, never died as we die ; it is, in the nature of things, impossible. Then all religion remains a crying for the moon. Be satisfied with mere ideas we cannot be. It was because Christ was set forth as the answer to universal cravings that Christianity swept the civilised world. Make Christianity no answer but only another

craving, and it has nothing to say of any value to humanity. It means throwing away the only clue we possess and banging the door on all human hopes.

But there are many who are not satisfied with this view of things, who are alive to these conclusions and therefore propose a view of religion which secures for Christianity and for all other religions a much higher place in human regard. It is held by this opinion that all religions contain a real objective revelation of God, and necessarily Christianity must be included among them. Instead of reducing Christianity to their level it proposes to elevate them to its level. But where this falls short of traditional Christianity is that it cannot admit anything unique or isolated about Christianity. It has to take its place as one of the great religious systems, and Christ as one of the great religious teachers. The hypothesis is that all religions teach the same truths under different forms, and that each demands some great teacher through whose personality the truth is embodied and made common. It matters not really whether the great teacher be Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, or Mohammed ; whether Brahma, Ormazd, Zeus, Jehovah, or Allah is worshipped ; whether the doctrine of Karma, kismet, or predestination be held ; whether immortality, nirvana, or eternal life be sought : all these are but forms of one process,

one Spirit, one attitude, one destiny. If Christ is to be reckoned an incarnation of God, He is only so in the same sense as every soul is ; or if in any special sense, then simply as all great teachers, saints, mahatmas are ; and even if He must be reckoned the greatest incarnation, not necessarily the final one. He may be the last of a series of incarnations, but He will almost certainly be superseded by a greater than Himself.

This all has the appearance of giving greater breadth to religion and of extending to the other great faiths of mankind a more generous welcome. Let us see whether this is really the case. It is true that the craving for an Incarnation of God seems to lie at the heart of all religious systems. The way in which this craving is manifested takes many forms. It is the unconscious tendency of the myths, hardly discerned until the clearer idea of incarnation emerges ; and all the more wonderful in that a poetic description of natural forces should come to take the form of an incarnate and dying God. There is the more conscious motive of the Indian religions in which we get a series of *avatars* or emanations where the earthly life of the god is given in some detail, as in the case of Krishna, but which perhaps no one ever mistook for real history. Then we have the theophanies of the Greek legends, in which the gods adopt human or animal forms generally to

spy out human conduct or to pursue amours with human beings ; to share human sin rather than to save men from it. All these are frankly mythical in their origin, and make little attempt at historical verisimilitude. The only thing which approaches the Christian idea at all is the attempt to deify the founders of religion or regard them as incarnations of the Divine. This has happened in the development of both Buddhism and Mohammedanism ; in the latter case almost certainly, and in the former not improbably, this has been due to an effort to approximate to Christianity. But in both cases these attempts are absolutely contrary to the teaching of their founders. Buddhism is really atheistic and by its very principles rules out the idea as unthinkable, and Mohammed's fierce unitarianism is meant to exclude any such conception. The idea has always been repressed wherever it has appeared in Mohammedanism, as witness the persecution of the Shiite or, more recent, Bahai sects. Yet all the more impressive is the desperate and pathetic attempt to satisfy something the heart of man must have.

Now to deny that Christ was the incarnation of God is to say that this incurable tendency of religion has never been fulfilled, that the craving it is designed to answer is an impossible one. It means that religion is man's prayer, but a prayer which has never been

answered. And that condemns all religion as equally false. In the face of this it seems an easy way out to admit that the idea of Incarnation is right, but that it must either be universalised, and every individual regarded as an incarnation of God, or the great sages and prophets of mankind regarded as successive incarnations of Christ ; for so in the new phraseology it is proposed to use the term Christ. But this equally fails to satisfy. If God is incarnate in all men, we have simply no revelation whatever of what the character of God is like ; and if Christ is successively incarnate in Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, we are left with extraordinary contradictions in character and teaching as a result. God has become the author of confusion. The truth is that in order to place Christianity among the other religions of mankind as one of them, we must first depress Christianity to their level, and then we discover that we have lowered the value and truth of all religion ; and to place Jesus among the sages of mankind and the founders of religions is not only to forget His peculiar consciousness, but it is to make those among whom He is placed persons of immensely less value. Only if Jesus is the Word which was immanent in all the prophets, can we understand, with Him as interpreter, what they were stammering to say, and value it at its highest. If in the idea of

nirvana, for instance, Buddha was attempting to state the Christian doctrine of eternal life, an existence to be attained by dying to self, then it is a doctrine that we can be thankful for. But if it is to be set side by side with the Christian doctrine as of equal truth, it invites an unfair comparison and becomes the most pessimistic and pernicious idea in the world. The same may be said of Mohammedan fatalism and the Christian doctrine of the will of God. But if the Word was the very personality of Jesus, we can then explain why there should be these differences, and the sages retain their place of honour in the light of Christ's interpretation. It is the difference between a prophetic communication and a self-disclosure, it is the difference between immanence and incarnation. What had to be mediated in the case of all others through their personality in Christ constituted His own personality. Not to allow for this difference is to accuse the great prophets and religious founders of moral confusion and reprehensible obtuseness. And it is interesting to notice that within Christianity not even the greatest saints claim to be incarnations of God, although they attribute all they are to Christ dwelling in them ; while the prophetic order has, in Christianity, ceased to be : the type is transcended. It is only in Mohammedanism, which is a throwback to Judaism, that a great prophet

again appears, and even then on a much lower level than that attained by the Hebrew prophets. Mohammed is the false prophet only in the sense that he is an anachronism.

Therefore if religion is going to have any value at all, and if the great religious teachers are to be given a high place, it is essential to give to Jesus Christ a unique place, the place which Christianity itself gives Him. To dispute that uniqueness is to deny the hope of all religion, and to put Him among the great teachers is not fair to them. Without Christ it is impossible to maintain our reverence for religion as such, or to believe that it is inspired ; and if we are forced to that conclusion there is nothing else about man which is left to share a better fate. Therefore it is imperative to show that Christ is unique and that what dwelt in others as an informing spirit was in Him His very self.

## IV

### THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO CHRISTIANITY

It would appear to be almost beyond discussion that Christ is essential to Christianity, yet the modern mind has not only considered the question as open to debate, but has even attempted to construct a Christianity for itself that shall not be dependent upon Christ ; and this with the sincere purpose of commending Christianity to its own generation. The lines upon which this attempt has been made can be conveniently summarised according to the belief that Jesus, in the one instance, and Christ, in the other, can be dispensed with : that is to say, the one line would attempt to dispense altogether, or nearly altogether, with a human founder of Christianity ; the other would seek to dispense with any interpretation of Christ's personality which demands for Him an essential, permanent, or divine place in the Christian revelation. We shall have to content ourselves with a brief outline of these suggestions, and need not therefore examine in detail their exposition at the hand of their respective authors, concerning ourselves only with the general idea.

We deal first with the attempt to make Christianity

independent of Jesus. On this theory Jesus had no historical existence such as the Gospel appears to relate. The story we find there is really a dramatised myth, a story told to illustrate a profound truth and to personify a wonderful experience. This theory has sought support in three directions successively.

The story of Jesus of Nazareth is a dramatisation of the Hebrew idea of the Messiah, as indeed His name signifies : Jesus Christ=*Saviour-Messiah*. We have an example in the Old Testament of the Jewish capacity for such a creation in the personification of the Messianic nation which is found in the " Servant " passages in the second part of the Book of Isaiah. There the personal form is so vivid that it forced an older generation of interpreters into imagining that it was a prevision of the career, and especially of the passion, of Jesus Christ ; and the more modern school into believing that, while the writer is explicit in declaring that by " the Servant of the Lord " he means the nation, or a godly remnant of the nation, he has borrowed the actual experiences of some pious servant of God who had suffered persecution (Job and Jeremiah have both been suggested) as a sort of model for his great picture of Vicarious Suffering. Now the Gospels have adopted a similar method and carried it to perfection ; and by selecting various passages from the Old Testament

they have compiled what all the world, until recently, has taken to be an historical story. Some see in this collection of Old Testament passages the sole and sufficient origin of the Gospel story ; which is therefore nothing but a patchwork of prophetic texts. Others are willing to concede that the innocent career and tragic crucifixion of an otherwise quite obscure person named Jesus may have served either as the inspiration to create the Gospel drama, or perhaps as the actual lay figure on which were draped the Messianic conceptions of the Old Testament. This last suggestion gets dangerously near readmitting the historic person as some sort of necessity, but it generally guards itself by maintaining that we know almost nothing of this Jesus, who, apart from one or two incidents which may have invested His name with a passing notoriety among a very small and undistinguished circle of admirers, did nothing worthy of the notice of serious history.

Now this theory requires us to postulate a literary miracle almost more incredible than the most miraculous interpretation of Christianity yet put forward. It is well known that many of the incidents recorded in the Gospels are declared to be fulfilments of prophecy, that passages are frequently quoted in support of such declarations, and that, sometimes without actual acknowledgment, the words of the Old Testament are

borrowed to describe New Testament events. Some of these quotations have been torn from their context to serve this purpose, the Hebrew or Greek version of the Old Testament is chosen, according as it best suits the writer's purpose, and sometimes words are deliberately altered for the same end. It is perfectly possible that a contrary tendency may sometimes have been at work, and the incidents in the Gospels slightly altered in order the better to fit the prophecy. But think what this theory we are discussing assumes. It assumes that a writer, or writers, went through the Old Testament and sketched out an imaginary life by piecing together scattered passages, many of which had no reference to the promised Messiah, and which bore only an arbitrary and fanciful likeness to events which, on this hypothesis, never happened; and with such materials and by such a method there was constructed the most wonderful story, and there was created the most living personality, literature knows. The measure of what a miracle this involves is one which can be illustrated from the extraordinary quotability of Shakespeare. A London newspaper used to publish every week a quotation from Shakespeare which could be applied to some current event. These were often most apt and ingenious, although, of course, their original application and their context had to be entirely ignored.

But would any one ever suggest that a person who was conversant with Shakespeare could, by piecing together these quotations, have written a history of the past few years, even though it had never happened !

Of course, Jewish scholars had formed from the Old Testament a fairly concrete conception of what the Messiah would be like, and the life task He would perform ; but the picture thus constructed was so entirely different from the person and career of Jesus that His Messianic claims were dismissed as both ridiculous and blasphemous. It was for making these pretensions that he was put to death, and it never occurred to any of them that in doing this they were only further fulfilling prophecy ; for they had never gathered from their Scriptures that the Messiah would die. On this ground, therefore, the theory is able to find least support where it ought to find the strongest.

The second line of support is of a more philosophical nature. It starts from the presupposition that ideas are everything and persons nothing ; that spiritual convictions must never be made to rest on historical facts. The Gospel picture of Jesus is a personification of the great religious notions of the realisation of the Idea, of redemption by sacrifice, and of union with God through knowledge of His will. These notions are found in all religions, they can be reached by pure philosophical

thought, but their embodiment in an historic human life is as unnecessary as it is unthinkable. It would be an unwarrantable concession to materialistic thought, would confuse the spiritual motive of religion, inevitably corrupt the purity of the Ideal, and seriously fetter its appropriation ; for personalities raise more difficulties and objections than ideas. If the Idea is to get realised at all, it can only be in all humanity slowly developing through history. The Gospel is a very beautiful personification of the Idea, but nothing more. This is a purely philosophical objection, and it has never bothered itself much to produce any working theory as to how this idea was actually transferred to canvas. It has been content to suggest that it was created by the general consciousness stimulated by the great social upheaval and mental synthesis of the first century. It has been claimed, however, that the Apostle Paul actually held something like this. The Christ he refers to, the Christ who was both his Life and his Universe, is not the historical Jesus. If he once knew Christ after the flesh, he now knows Him so no more. Whatever this may mean, to say that Paul could have come to all this without the historical Jesus, that he could have been crucified with Christ without Christ being crucified at all, or that Paul did not regard this inner Christ and the historical Jesus as one and the same Person, is a reading

of the Apostle which does cruel violence to his writings and can only be supported by the total inversion of the basis on which his faith rested.

It has more recently been claimed that some more substantial basis and more imaginable processes in support and explanation of these ideas have now been discovered, not this time in Hebrew prophecy or in philosophical ideas, but in the myths and mysteries of pre-Christian religions. Zodiac myths, water myths, vegetation myths, provide the real origins of the story of Christ's birth, career, death, and resurrection. The names of Mary, John the Baptist, Jesus, the Twelve Apostles, can be identified with the personalities of the ancient and widely known myths; the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are derived from the lustrations and meals of the Graeco-Oriental mysteries. The evidence for and against these identifications must be sought in the works that deal more expressly with these subjects. It must suffice to say here that it has been difficult to get this extraordinary hypothesis even considered, and a closer examination has resulted not only in the complete discrediting of the alleged evidence, but the fanciful resemblances, inaccurate identifications, and stretching of similarities, have overwhelmed the whole thing with ridicule. It has, unfortunately, only served to discredit the science of Comparative

Religion, in uninformed quarters, by confusing its genuinely scientific methods with these hasty and unfounded speculations. But we are discussing here only the general principles, and this theory requires us to assume that Christianity displaced the ancient myths and mysteries so successfully that, despite their wide observance, none but the most scanty records can be recovered; and that Christianity accomplished this, not because it was the reality they prefigured, and the answer they craved, but simply because it was the same old thing under another name.

As a matter of fact this insistence upon the similarity existing between the Hellenistic myths and the Gospel story which has been brought forward in order to discredit the origins of Christianity bids fair to become the greatest confirmation of the truth of Christianity that has been granted to us for generations. For it shows that the human heart left free to the contemplation of its own need and the impression gained from the processes of nature and life, began to construct for itself a personality and a career which Christ most wonderfully resembles. The rigid prediction and fulfilment scheme of the older prophetic interpretation had, by its unnaturalness and rigidity, temporarily obscured what is now seen to be a much more wonderful correspondence between the whole develop-

ment of Hebrew prophecy and its transcendent fulfilment in Christ. The growing agreement that there has not been anything in the nature of direct filiation between the myths and the Gospels, between the mysteries and Christian institutions, has only forced upon us the recognition that through them all there was working one and the selfsame Spirit ; that nature and grace tell much the same story because they have the same Author ; and that God had not only not left Himself without a witness in any land or age, but had imparted to all men some preparation for the revelation of His Christ, and even granted them some inheritance in the promises they could only see from afar.

It is along much less drastic lines that the second attempt moves, namely, that which holds that it is not essential to the full appropriation of Christianity to give Christ that place which has been accorded Him by the traditional theology. This, it is held, is a corruption partly induced by a somewhat hectic devotion and largely due to the attempt to construe the Person of Christ in terms of Greek philosophy. It is admitted that Christ is as essential to the Gospel as Shakespeare is to his plays : not less so, but also no more. Just as one can enter into all the artistic glories of Shakespeare's works without necessarily professing admiration for Shakespeare's character or attachment to his

personality, and need not even be shut out of that appreciation because one accepts the unorthodox Baconian hypothesis ; so the truth of Christ's teaching and an actual share in His religious experience are possible quite apart from devotion to His person or the acceptance of the orthodox explanations of His nature.

But, here again, we find that there are various grades of objection to the essentiality of Christ's Person to His Gospel :—

There is the attitude which regards Him as the Nazarene Prophet, the last and greatest of all the Hebrew seers, the teacher of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, the creator of the beautiful and tender ethic which has revolutionised the world, the religious reformer who has done away with every ritual and moral barrier to the free communion of the soul with God ; the Son of man, who announced His complete union with humanity and taught men to regard Him as the Elder Brother. This attitude is, perhaps, not so common as it once was ; for it is quite unable to sustain itself against the evidence of Christ's own self-consciousness revealed in the Gospels. Whatever Jesus thought himself to be, He never thought of himself as a prophet. He knew that the prophets had come to an end with the Kingdom of God : the thing

they foresaw had arrived. Henceforth the least member of the Kingdom of God was greater than the greatest prophet who only foretold it. Moreover this attitude is bound to regard Christ's Messianic consciousness with dislike and regret. There has been an unsuccessful endeavour to dismiss as untrustworthy any evidence that He made Messianic claims: unsuccessful because, although He was evidently most anxious, for fear of confusing the issues or raising false expectations, that it should not be generally known that He claimed Messiahship, nevertheless it was this claim, and this claim alone, that enabled the authorities to compass His destruction. Indeed the irresistible evidence of the Gospels has forced others to regard Jesus as fatally misled by religious enthusiasm, or even by less worthy ambition, into entangling Himself with this obsolete and discredited notion, which all save fanatical Jews had then surrendered or outgrown. Nothing can save those who take this attitude from going still further and regarding Jesus in this matter as less than the prophets who preceded Him; as a man perhaps of great capacity and spirituality who unfortunately fell a prey to that last infirmity of noble minds and thus wrecked his own work. This issue has been more seriously forced since it has been discovered that the title "Son of man" is not a modest disavowal

that He was anything more than a human being, but a Messianic title of quite transcendent dignity, the use of which only concealed His Messianic convictions because He always spoke of the Son of man in the third person, and did not openly and explicitly identify Himself with the Son of man.

Neither is much heard to-day of the idea that "Messiah" sufficiently describes the office and personality of Christ. For it is difficult to gather from the Old Testament any clear and consistent conception of the Messiah. It is a conception that passed through many developments and can hardly be completely harmonised. Speaking quite generally, it may be said that the development proceeds upon dual, and apparently irreconcilable, lines of deification, on the one hand, and humanisation, on the other. The idea of a glorious monarch and princely deliverer, who employs the martial methods of an earthly conqueror and the compelling devices of an Oriental despot, gives way to one who slays the wicked only by the breath of His lips and rules the nations only by the rod of His mouth; that is by His teaching and precepts. The prince has gradually become a prophet, though an unusually successful and commanding one. Parallel with this development the idea is being worked out that the Messiah will not only be an ambassador of God whose

seals will be His message and His triumph, but through His character and nature He will be representative of God and, therefore, a satisfaction of the age-longing craving for a manifestation of Jehovah Himself. In the Apocalyptic writings, into which prophecy gradually deteriorated, the Messiah has become an entirely supernatural being, the Judge of mankind and the Ruler over all nations ; and yet He retains a title which is reminiscent of humanity, namely, " son of man." This title was first suggested by Daniel's personification of that Kingdom which, in contrast to the bestial empires which preceded it, has as its symbol a son of man.

Now all that we can say about the Messianic function as a category of Christ is that the Person of Christ alone unites its composite character and fulfils, and more than fulfils, the apparently impossible conceptions it was trying to hold together, namely, that of humility and majesty, of humanity and divinity. It is obvious that Jesus was searching for some explanation of His own consciousness, and that the Messianic function only partly satisfied Him ; not only because it was confused, but because it was inadequate. He could do nothing with the external regality or methods of force laid down for the Messiah ; He resisted the appeal to military or political action ; yet He wanted something more than Messiahship anywhere gave Him, and it was for

claiming more that He was charged with blasphemy. The idea that the Messianic function sufficiently explains the personality of Christ is thrown into confusion by the discovery that Christ adopted the Apocalyptic idea of the Messiah, at least in regard to its terminology and imagery ; for in the Apocalyptic writings the Messiah has become an indisputably divine figure. The adoption of this conception has only confirmed in some minds the suggestion that Christ was really mad, for Apocalypse seems to many supernaturalistic, impossible, and the mere product of dementia. It is more than likely that we have not yet found the clue to Jewish Apocalyptic, which, despite its fervid imagery, often deliberately adopted in order to conceal its real meaning from suspicious authorities, may be much more sane and human than we recognise, and probably contains the outlines of a genuine philosophy of history. Still more, therefore, have we yet to discover the significance of Christ's adoption of Apocalyptic language, itself so symbolical.

That Christ drew upon this material is undoubted, and the recognition of how integral this is for the understanding of His personality is now acknowledged ; but it is as unlikely that He adopted the Apocalyptic picture unchanged as that He was able to adapt Himself completely to the older prophetic outline. Nothing

of staggering or theatrical manifestation would have satisfied the mind of Jesus. The fact that He uses " Son of man " with a frequency and fulness unmatched in the Apocalyptic literature shows that the title only provided Him with a suggestion which He adapted and expanded to the measure of His own consciousness. It is not possible to say that He adopted this term in order to emphasise His humanity. For any human being to feel constrained to do that would be a sufficiently remarkable thing, and in itself a revelation that something else was present to his consciousness. But it may well mean that the title was chosen by Jesus because He did conceive His Messianic function as *humane*, and His further coming to be realised in the great victories of humanity ; but not less, therefore, as the revelation of what God is, and these victories as His own personal triumphs. In short, we are led by these considerations of Christ's Messianic consciousness straight to that definition of the Word made flesh and God made man in which the Christian Church has expressed its faith. The Messianic function holds more than was thought.

It has been the more recent modern attitude of thought to regard both the Hebrew " Messiah " and the Hellenic " Logos " as lines of thought which only confuse our understanding of Jesus and which have done

disservice to the true and abiding message of Christianity. And this, not so much because they were inadequate, but simply because there is no problem of Christ's personality which it is of importance to Christianity to solve. All attempts to find a category for the personality of Christ involve us in metaphysics which can never do anything but distract and distort Christian faith. Yet consideration of this problem is surely not to be prohibited by the fear that we shall be involved in metaphysics ; that is a danger not to be avoided in thinking about anything. Faith is convinced of the reality of its object, convinced that its object is worthy of its devotion, and the suggestion that faith deals only with values while reason deals with facts does not really help us. It is *fact and its value* which constitutes the only reality in which religion can rest. The problem is, and it will be found concealed under many discussions about Christ, whether Christ is Himself the Object, or only the Example of faith. Let us face that issue.

There is no dispute that Christianity has come to be, by whatever process, a worship of Christ ; whether we take our evidence from the creeds or from popular devotion ; for here they are agreed, and, after all, the one is merely an attempt to justify the other. Now this worship of Christ is felt by some to be a corruption, and their objection to it is based upon the Gospel

records. Others dislike it because it seems to shut out Christ as an example of faith, which they feel to be valuable. We can return to this later. Let us first see, however, whether the Gospel presents us with Christ as an object of worship.

It is claimed that the Gospels, critically examined, yield no claim on the part of Jesus to be worshipped or made the object of faith. He directed all worship to be paid to God alone. He Himself prayed to the Father and taught men to do the same. This is no longer pressed to mean that Jesus was only a teacher of the truth of God. It is admitted that He is not only the Preacher of the Gospel, but its very embodiment. It is because of what He is that the Gospel is believable. His personality is not only essential to its proclamation ; it is the very incarnation of the Gospel. In this sense Christ is Christianity. All this comes very much nearer to giving Jesus the supreme and essential place that the Church has come to demand for Him. But it is still maintained by this attitude that Jesus stands upon the human side of the gulf : He is only man. He is the first and, in some senses, the only Christian ; He is the King of saints, the Prince of mystics, the Flower of humanity ; but not divine in any distinctive sense, not God. He may be the greatest aid to faith, for it is He who makes the Gospel credible, but He

is not the object of faith. He is an incarnation of the Gospel, but He is not an incarnation of God. That distinction is still clung to. Now before we go any further, it must be admitted that this point of view has done immeasurable service in making vivid to our age the figure of Jesus and in actually pressing His example upon the world. The idea of Jesus Christ as God incarnate had been set forth in such a way as to make his earthly life absolutely unreal, and His questionings, His agonies, His prayers, mere acting. This idea has encouraged Christendom to excuse itself from following His example ; for how could God be an example to be followed by man ? Whereas this humanitarian interpretation has brought Jesus very near to us, and the reckoning of Him as a natural member of the human race has exalted our whole conception of humanity and has brought a new sense of comradeship in the fight. As man He has meant something to us for life. As God He seemed to be only an idea for theologians to explicate.

But this is to overlook the fact that the Church has always confessed that Jesus Christ, whatever else He was, was man, " of reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting," living our life on our terms, walking by faith and not by sight, needing help of prayer, feeling the full force of temptation, grief, disappointment, despair.

Only it has gone on to hold that this was not the full explanation. He was also very God incarnate ; and yet in such a way as never to be inconsistent with true manhood. Almost the first heresy to be recognised as such by the Church was that which looked upon Christ as having only a phantasmal human existence. Now whether the full Church conception is a possible one or not, the first thing to be done is to discover whether the Gospels support it.

Was there anything in the consciousness or personality of Jesus Christ which transcends that conceivable to a human individual, and yet did this consciousness work through a purely human machine or did this personality possess a purely human consciousness ? The exact psychological terms need not concern us here, and, in fact, are not available, because there is no one else to whom they can be applied ; but is there indication of something divine working through something human ?

The evidence for this has generally been sought in evidence which is not quite relevant, and presented in a way which only stimulates revolt. What has been sought for is the clear and dogmatic claim to a position beyond that of a human being ; and when this is produced, as it can be, there follows an apparently unending discussion whether these claims are really claims to divinity ;

whether they were actually made by Jesus or simply invented by the Evangelists ; and whether, if original to Jesus and involving divinity, He had any right to make such claims. The discussion badly wants shifting out of this trampled and trodden area of conflict. Fortunately we can find in the field, not of clear consciousness or of dogmatic claim, but in that of indirect claims and occasionally revealed consciousness, an area which is fresh and which yields evidence which gives much clearer support to both sides of the Church's faith.

Let us notice first of all the claims that Jesus made upon affection and fidelity. Jesus claims absolutely the first place in love and devotion, transcending the most sacred of earthly ties to such a degree that love for Him may sometimes make all other love look mere hate in comparison. And He demands that this love shall be intense enough to sacrifice, if need be, comfort, safety, life itself. It may be answered that these claims are really only for devotion to a cause with which Christ happens to be identified. A leader like Garibaldi might make almost similar claims upon his men. But it is also clear that Christ regards His cause and Himself as so identical that a man's attitude towards Him is determinant of the state of his soul and will be the test of the final judgment. Therefore Jesus has identified Himself with the supreme cause of human history and the

welfare of a man's soul. There is really no such coincidence possible save with the personality of God. And that this is quite indirectly and, apparently, unconsciously made is all the more important.

Then there is the other very strange claim that it is Himself that is served in all service of humanity. To give a beggar a cup of cold water, to receive a child, to care for those in any kind of distress ; all this is actually done to Him. This confesses to a curious consciousness which goes beyond anything individual and identifies Jesus with something universal to humanity. This, again, is only predicable of the immanence of God in human life. The curious indirectness of the claim should be carefully noted.

Finally there is a class of sayings less frequent, but uttered in a sudden flaring forth of intense feeling which lights up Christ's personality to the very depths. There are two of these sayings which have their value because they are uttered during intense emotion when His whole nature was stirred as by a great upheaval. The one is His call to men to come to Him and find in Him their rest. The context sets this saying in a moment of ecstatic thanksgiving, in which Jesus speaks of the intimate and unique knowledge which the Father and the Son mutually possess. It is on emerging from this ecstasy and looking round upon burdened

and wearied humanity that Jesus tells men, not to go to God or to enter the ecstasy which He has just experienced, but to come to Himself and be at rest. If these words are compared with the passage in Ecclesiasticus, on which they have been supposed to be modelled, where Wisdom calls to men to find rest in her instruction ; and if the actual form of the words : not, " I will *give* you rest," as if it were a secret which could be conveyed ; but " I will rest you," as if it was Himself that was man's only resting-place, then we shall see how tremendous a claim this really is. One thinks of Augustine's memorable words : " Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee." And it is Jesus Christ who claims to fill that place.

The second saying is the lament over Jerusalem. Here again Jesus is overborne by a great storm of emotion when He thinks of the city which has been so blind and is now nearing its doom, and He cries out, " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! " It is not the " how often " to which we would call attention, which has been taken to signify a pretemporal consciousness, for that interpretation of the phrase has been questioned ; but it is to the whole cry, which is the

outburst of one who felt toward His people as a mother, and would have sheltered them from every evil. That the words are drawn from Him by travail and uttered in pain only increases their value. It is a sudden disclosure of a heart forced by pain to confess that it is the Mother of mankind.

In both these sayings we touch a consciousness which can only be classified as divine ; and yet it is a consciousness that is only manifested indirectly or under the disturbance of great emotion. The only suggestion that has ever come near to providing a category for these phenomena is the Church's faith that Christ was a divine personality set in a human consciousness, and that consciousness sometimes manifesting its divine core.

There remains only one attempt to turn the weight of this evidence which now falls to be considered. It has been suggested that the unmistakable tendency of this evidence for the divine consciousness of Jesus must be accepted, but that Jesus has simply reached what is potential to humanity as a whole. He was conscious of His divine Sonship, the first of mankind to be clearly conscious of it, but it was His mission in life to awaken everyone to a similar consciousness, for all are capable of it. Now it is exceedingly important that we should do justice to the truth in this contention,

which has been so calamitously ignored by orthodox Christology, while at the same time maintaining the uniqueness of Jesus. We must have the whole evidence of the Gospel in mind. That Jesus did teach that man was a son of God cannot be disputed. The parable of the Prodigal Son is meaningless without that assumption. He taught also that men could become the sons of the Highest by being like their Father. And we must believe that Jesus used this term "son" with something of the depth and fulness which were derived from His own consciousness of Sonship. When He called upon men to follow Him, to share His baptism and drink His cup, He was not mocking them with impossible ideals. He was asking them to be as He was, to live for the same ends, to undertake the same task. Jesus invited men to His ethical and spiritual level. The blunting of this call by the declaration that Jesus can never be followed by mortal men is responsible both for the low state of Christian discipleship, as well as for the revolt which has claimed an all too easy familiarity with Christ's highest experiences and even equality with His position. Yet we have to balance all this by the equally indisputable evidence that Jesus nevertheless drew a distinction between Himself and others. Here again we do not lay emphasis for the purposes of this argument upon such passages as those

where "the Son" is used in an absolute sense, or plead the saying where knowledge of the Father is confined to the Son and those to whom He reveals Him : nor do we draw upon the Fourth Gospel. For these definite claims only invite an unfortunate attempt to explain them away or arouse resentment, unless the meaning and necessity of them have been established beforehand in a different way. We turn again, therefore, to the indirect evidence, and it is of a most extraordinary character. It is found in the simple fact, of the profoundest significance when the nature of the Gospel record is taken into account, that never does Jesus associate Himself with others in speaking of the Father. It is always *my* Father, or *your* Father. When He says *our* Father it is only to teach His disciples what to say when *they* pray. The Lord's Prayer is not the prayer in which the Lord joins with the disciples. Indeed, we have no record that He ever prayed with His disciples.

The difficulty has been to give equal weight to, and to combine in one conception of Christ, these two apparently irreconcilable lines of evidence. It is not enough to say that Jesus was the first of mankind to become conscious of divine sonship, neither on the other hand dare we deny that man is called upon to share Christ's sonship. That solution offers no relief

which calls Christ's sonship essential and eternal, while ours is ethical and temporal, for nothing must be allowed to hide the glorious fact that Christ's sonship was an ethical achievement within actual human conditions. But neither can we fall back upon anything accidental, like the categories of "great religious genius" or "King of saints"; nothing which leaves Jesus able to be surpassed is tolerable for a moment to those who are alive to what the issues really are. There is really nothing so simple and so concordant with all the facts as the Church's conviction that the personality of Jesus was divine, but that He took human nature in its entirety, lived life on our terms and with our limitations, and therefore had not even a knowledge of His own divine personality save as that came to Him gradually and through a purely human consciousness. This alone explains the gradual awakening of Jesus to His own significance, the questioning of the various categories which the sacred writings provided in such terms as "the Christ," or "the Son of man"; while at the same time it shows how there could exist alongside all this something deeper, a sight of which was gained in moments of ecstasy, or the influence of which was expressed in claims the full implication of which may not have been at the moment recognised by Him. It would be precarious to refer these differ-

ences to the supra-liminal and sub-liminal consciousness respectively, with which modern psychology has now made us familiar ; for we are only at the beginning of research into this subject, and we do not know how these areas are related ; but it does suffice to make it not incredible that Jesus consciously did not know Himself to be divine, but subconsciously He did and occasionally that burst into view. And we can see how this must be so if the Incarnation is not to be deprived of its moral significance of being a real conquest gained within humanity, while at the same time it is to meet the demand of a real and final revelation to humanity : for the one need, Jesus must not know too much of His divinity ; for the other, we must not know too little.

And then, to understand how Jesus lifts us to the level which He has gained for us through His human life, it is only necessary to refer to the Apostolic doctrine of what we are " in Christ," that is in union with Him. In the union with Him which faith accomplishes we share what He wrought for us, even to His exaltation to the heavenly places and to the glory He had before the worlds began. Unless we keep His place unique by reason of His personality, we cannot be lifted to such a height ; and while we do actually share it, even to sitting with Him on His throne, it is in such absolute dependence upon Him that no room is left for that

dangerous delusion and intolerable conceit that in our own persons we are God ; yet at the same time man's craving for the infinite and the holy is satisfied. For we share with Him what He gained for us as human, and yet He could only have gained that for us if He had been divine. It is an interesting confirmation of the possibility of reconciling these two sides, the absolute uniqueness of Christ's personality and yet our share in all which union with Him brings, that these two sides are found equally emphasised in the Fourth Gospel. No document in the New Testament is so clear on the uniqueness of Christ, none so clear about our sharing with Him to the full all that He is. The conclusion is that the Apostolic doctrine and the Church's faith are entirely justified. Christ is absolutely necessary to Christianity, and the false antithesis, whether Christ is the object or the example of faith, is evaded by saying that He is truly both.

## V

### THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO PERSONALITY

THERE is clearly something wrong with human personality. Man is a profoundly unhappy being. He knows some serene days, has his hours of pleasure, his moments of joy ; but his spirit always returns to what seems the normal level of disturbance, unsatisfied craving, painful unrest. This is explained as due to a lack of correspondence between human nature and its environment. We are fired by boundless hopes which history is always disappointing, we are attracted by personal ideals which we seem unable to realise, we have a capacity for love which separation and death break in upon and ruthlessly destroy. Deep down, all the effort, the energy, the inquiry, which characterise life, are due simply to an attempt to overcome this disparity. In the main three methods are always being tried afresh :—

The one is that of depressing human expectation and desire to the level of the possible and realisable ; although it may take very varied and even contradictory forms, ranging from the subtle mental processes of Buddhism to the gross physical methods of gluttony

and drunkenness. And this course is pursued on the assumption, conscious or unconscious, that man has outgrown his position, become a slave to desire, developed too much mentality, and release is, therefore, to be found in turning back again to more impersonal conditions or in sinking back to the stage of animal satisfaction. It is, on the whole, a pessimistic proposal, and it is doubtful also if it can be actually carried out.

Another method consists in a ceaseless labour to make our environment correspond to our ever-growing desires, labouring to perfect human relationships, reduce pain, prolong life, construct society on more equable and easy-working lines. This is an intensely optimistic proposal, and it appears to overlook the fact that human desire outgrows its satisfactions very rapidly, and there seem to be certain limitations in nature which must for ever defeat human hopes. Despite everything that man can do, nothing seems to increase happiness ; and there is much to indicate that with social progress, more universal education, deeper culture, man will only feel the contradiction of life more acutely.

A third method is that of establishing the supremacy of the soul, and of rising above this inevitable contrast by means of spiritual independence. Man, even in such a world, can be sufficient for himself. He can bear all "the weary weight of this unintelligible

world," and yet refuse to groan under the burden. He can steel his heart against the sorrows of life, refusing to allow them to disturb his equanimity. And this can rise, as in Stoicism or Islam, to something like an acceptance of the will of God, though it is always in danger of becoming a mere acceptance of nature or fate. Or, passing beyond the individual solution of the problem, and still maintaining that man is sufficient for man, we can turn to love and find in pure sexual relationships, or in family affection, all that is needed to satisfy the soul. There are moments in life when this seems enough, when the rapture of youthful love brings unutterable joy and transforms the whole of existence ; and even when the first romance has died away, the deep understanding between two souls provides a refuge against the harsh demands of the world and makes in life's desert a place of still waters and green pastures. But the more one leans on this, the more one is laying oneself open to an invasion of shattering pain. There is always the possibility of misunderstanding ; an idealising process may have gone so far as to bring about a dangerous awakening to reality ; above all, there is the lurking haunt of death, which may suddenly leave the soul worse than bereaved, actually cleft in twain. Unless human love is sacramental of something beyond itself, tragedy lies at its core.

Nor is it any safeguard to suggest that a wider philanthropy is an insurance against personal disappointment or bereavement. That, again, always works down to the love of definite persons, unless this passionate desire can be deceived into lavishing its devotion upon the cold, dead idol of abstract humanity. And, anyhow, it simply multiplies the chances of disillusionment and pain. No other human being or collection of human beings can suffice to fill the void there is in the human heart.

Passing beyond the Stoical acquiescence in nature or fate, spurning the sentimental notion that human love can content our ambitions, there emerges the last great attempt to establish the supremacy of the soul: the Superman. Here man is to recognise his individual superiority to nature, to abstract notions, to humanity singly or in the mass. There is nothing beyond ourselves or above man, and so man must be his own deity, refusing to surrender his personality to any social, ethical, or rational obedience, since the self is supreme. It is admitted that to attain this altitude there must be a crushing of all craving for affection as well as of all sentimental consideration for others. One must be content to be god, and therefore to be alone. One question immediately occurs: Must there be an actual ascendancy over all others, or is the whole

thing confined to one's idea of what one is? In that case there are lots of persons already supermen in their own eyes : in fact most of us are, and are not at all enjoying it. The other question is whether man, thus conceived or attained, bears any resemblance to the hitherto prevailing idea of God. That can be answered at once. The thing at its very highest achievement is nothing more than a swaggering self-delusion. In the end nature comes down and crushes this splendid creature out of existence, and even before that happens the strain of the effort and the effect of constant pretence may hurl reason from its seat. There *are* human beings who think that they are God. They are mostly in asylums. There are human creatures who think that they are the most glorious types of humanity in existence. They are either on the way to an ignominious collapse whenever they meet some one who with one word will expose their impotence, their ignorance, their pretence, or if that does not bring them down, it is only in their own eyes that they will remain as they were. They may think themselves wonderful. No one else will. Is this to be superman : to believe yourself such against all critics? It is quite a harmless insanity, but it is insanity nevertheless.

The truth has to be admitted. Man is a lonely creature, with no fit companion for his soul ; and the

higher he climbs the more he feels it. What he craves is the Infinite. He is not always immediately aware of what he needs. He may take years himself, or the collective consciousness may take generations, to explore various avenues promising to lead to satisfaction, but the verdict is already inevitable and monotonous. There is nothing on earth which can satisfy man ; least of all himself.

No attempt to repress the lofty ambitions and mighty cravings of the soul can be guaranteed success. There are apparently cases where a man can drown, or drug, or depress his higher self beyond visible recovery, but whether this is ever a permanent condition depends upon a disclosure of his inner consciousness, which few are ready to afford, and a knowledge of what possible awakenings another life may contain. All that we know is that in this present life such attempts often drive the soul into bitter revolt and divide the personality against itself. And even when apathy seems to have been perfectly attained, the whole conflict is sometimes revived by some trifling issue, some chance circumstance, some stray thought. Even if the whole of external life could be shorn of its tragedy of misunderstanding, its shock of pain, its invasion of death, there is little guarantee that an Elysian existence protracted to eternity would really satisfy man's heart, if that

eternity contained nothing answering to himself. Certainly the nearer approach to exterior comfort brings no corresponding interior rest.

There remain still to be tried the consolations of culture, the satisfactions of knowledge, the maxims of philosophy. That these often offer some hopeful promise we need not dispute. To be able to turn the mind with ease to the monuments of literature and art is to have at hand an unfailing source of delight and joy. But most of these are inextricably interwoven with, and are often the actual expression of, man's religious hopes; and without some sympathy with these hopes one cannot be admitted into the deepest appreciation. Moreover, they have the dangerous tendency of wakening desires which they themselves cannot satisfy. A good deal of the modern return to religion has been stimulated by the profounder knowledge of history and the keener appreciation of art.

No one any longer proposes that a knowledge of exact science can take the place of religion. Its range has not only become too vast for even the best minds to compass, but science has now to acknowledge that its researches, far from yielding any real explanation of the inner meaning of existence, have actually made mystery more universal, enshrining it even at the heart

of those things which we thought had been satisfactorily explained.

Is there any possibility of contentment being found in an Infinite Idea as the object of thought, such as the Absolute of philosophy, the Categorical Imperative of ethics, the speculative Infinity that is involved in our perception of finite things? There are probably still persons to be found who believe that ethical maxims, a philosophical attitude, the looking at all things from a certain angle, the belief in the Reality of the Ideal, are sufficient to bring to the heart of man rest and peace; but these ideas are found mainly among those who dabble only in the shallows and second-hand sources of ethical and philosophical thought. On the high places of the field the battle is already over and lost, not because ethics and philosophy are discredited, but because they all end up in admitting that the Infinite must be something more than an Idea if it is to be apprehended by men and be an all-sufficing Other answering to their own personality.

Let us come down to the internal psychological situation. We find ourselves under the dominion of great ideals, ideals of truth, of moral perfection, of social duty. It is difficult to think that these are self-created, for they press upon us with a demand that in the final issues does not let even personal existence

weigh against them. If we ignore them, reject them, they do not disappear, but continue their demand with now even a suggestion of danger to ourselves if they are neglected. If we attempt to fulfil them, they seem to exalt themselves with every advance we make and reveal more and more the failure of our own condition. It seems beyond imagining that this extraordinary division is of our own creation. It is no less impossible to rest in the thought of an Ideal, which is not of human creation so much as creative of humanity, and yet make that a mere impersonal Idea : an Idea which has no Thinker behind it. It is not easy to justify rationally the claim that men ought to sacrifice themselves for an idea, for the end of that might be that humanity would delete itself in faithfulness to an idea, and then the idea itself would cease to exist. But since it does demand the utmost sacrifice of self, it must be that the Ideal is greater than self : it is the basis, and the anchor, and the fulfilment of personality. Moreover the only thing we can do to satisfy the ideal is to incorporate it in personality, incarnate it in our characters and lives. What is, therefore, the other side of personality is something so very like personality that personality is its only possible expression : the only difference discernible being that it is ethically infinite.

But mere ethical approximation to our infinite ideal

is for us either impossible or unsatisfying. Before we can attain ethical equality with the Ideal, we need the communion without which it cannot be attained, and yet which we cannot have until we have attained. We need an ideal which can be ministered to us through personal communion prior to attainment, that is, we need personal communion as essential to ethical perfection, because in no other way can ethical perfection, which is a personal attainment, be reached. Even if it could be so attained, it would be unconsummated for us without personal union, for ethical likeness to the Infinite could never satisfy the craving of a personal being; nothing but a personal relationship can complete our own nature.

Therefore the craving of the human heart is for that which is both ethically perfect and intensely personal, in short, for a Personal God. This God must be at least as personal as ourselves. We need not discuss whether He must be supra-personal, because we cannot have the slightest idea what that means. What is demanded is that God Himself shall be the completion of our personality, and that this completion shall consist of a union of spirit with Spirit more interpenetrating than any other union we know, and yet never destructive of personality, either in God or in man.

But no sooner is this demand satisfied by the

gradual clearing of man's consciousness of God, than another demand begins to make itself felt. The ethical disparity between ourselves and our ideals is one which is reckoned by all serious sincere souls as one that is chargeable upon themselves. Without committing ourselves to the doctrine of an historical Fall, or even to an individual transgression of a personal command or a betrayal of a personal trust, all searching ethical inquiry reveals the presence of shame, deep distress, and unwillingness to forgive ourselves, for what we discern ourselves to be in the presence of this unfolding ideal. We discover how absolutely dependent upon the ethical ideal we are ; dependent on its persisting when we fall short of it, nay, dependent on some redemptive activity on its part, unless our failure and rebellion are to leave us with our moral vision continually declining and darkening. In short, in any deep analysis, it is soon discovered that there needs to be something more than an ideal to explain and guarantee our ethical life ; even something more than a mere persisting and unchanging Personality. The Personality must be a redeeming one, constantly motived by an intense love for our souls ; for no mechanical pressure, no static nature, can keep pace with all the tortuous and deceptive devices of human personality. Sooner or later it dawns upon us that this Personality who accom-

panies our inner life must not only feel such relationship to us as to cause Him to care with an unimaginable solitude, but this care must involve for Him the suffering which is inseparable from love. The only chance of our being kept ethically alive, and the only possibility of our ever recovering from a moral fall, is for us to feel pained at the discrepancy and never to cease from penitence for the failure. And yet such pain cannot begin with ourselves ; for all our discrepancy and failure only leads to increasing callosity of soul. It is only the higher nature which can feel pain in the presence of the lower, not *vice versa* ; and that higher nature must incarnate itself in the lower through pain, transmit the benefits of its saving pain, and only so lift us to itself. Now here we have reached a demand of God which religion has always pictured, in more or less vivid fashion, as the Reality on which our souls depend : a God who is Personal, Incarnative, Suffering, and Redemptive. Thus He is declared to be by prophetic souls and thus He is demanded to be by those who have dared the depths of repentance. We have really reached the Christian idea of God by strictly ethical and purely internal inquiry. We stand here on the level of the Old Testament Prophets and Psalmists, who always declare that God is personal, or living, as they express it ; that He is forgiving ; and that He will manifest

Himself as such to the waiting soul. The Christian idea of God is therefore true to the ethical and personal needs of the human heart.

The remaining question is whether this idea demands a personal incarnation and an historic work of redemption. That such a thing has happened is, as we have seen, the message of the Gospels and the burden of the Apostolic witness ; but we are often presented with this before we have really become aware of our need, with the result that the Incarnation is rejected as impossible, not so much on any rational proof that it could not be, as on the assumption that it is unnecessary. We have shown that all religion looks toward an Incarnation as the only answer to its prayer. Does the heart, when it is free from the influence of this tradition, and is left face to face with nothing but its own necessities, make the same demand ?

Let us see whether an unincarnate manifestation of God would suffice. There is no need to doubt the reality or dispute the consolation of that spiritual presence of God which men have discerned behind the phenomena of nature or felt at work in their own hearts. The vastness, the power, the order, the beauty of nature, constitute to the sensitive soul a positive revelation of God, and there are times when its ministries are a refuge from the burden of thought, the

desolations of our hearts, and the meanness and madness of man. And in this there need be no pantheistic confusion of nature with God : the whole realm of the material is a sacrament, the body through which otherwise incommunicable grace is conveyed. But there is always present a tendency, either towards a pantheism which slips down at last into the most hopeless materialism, or towards a personification of natural forces which lands us in a confused and immoral polytheism : a tendency continually manifesting itself both in great religions and in individual experience. And few would dispute that at no stage does this religion of nature answer the deep yearning for the companionship of something on our own level of consciousness, something that can feel as we feel, a heart that answers ours. Thus it is that men turn from seeking to find in nature the full manifestation of God, and begin to search within themselves. This movement was most noticeable in the nineteenth century, after the discovery of evolution seemed to depict nature as a self-acting machine which considered only the type and concerned itself not at all about the individual. God cannot be found without, men declared : He must be sought within the soul. And God can be found there, and has been found there, most intimately. Whether through the toil of philosophical thought, or

by the swifter intuitions of the heart, behind the sense of ignorance and sin men have discerned the truth and holiness against which these could alone have been felt. And deep communion with oneself strengthens the sense of an Other facing self, a Self like to ours, only infinite. Here mystic experience has evolved through centuries a sureness of method, a wealth of content, and a consensus of testimony which cannot be dismissed. And yet, here again, there is ample evidence that this does not quite satisfy the heart or complete the personality. Tendencies towards vagueness, towards a preference for the impersonal, the trial of sub-conscious methods manifest themselves. Communion gives place to contemplation, conference to silence, union to absorption : the personality is not being completed, it is being hypnotised, paralysed, eviscerated. And a certain morbidness, sadness, uncertainty, and, at length, despair begin to appear in the literature and the life of all such movements. They have mistaken the method of finding God *in* the soul for the need of finding Him *with* the soul.

Between these two attempts to find God without and within, comes the line of Hebrew development, which it should be noticed is the only line that can be developed ultimately ; with its strong insistence on nature as God's work, on the one hand, and its gathering about the pro-

phetic Word, on the other ; yet not without appreciation of other methods and the promise of uniting them in something higher. The Hebrew craves to hear the Word of God expressed in human tones, he passionately desires the manifestation of God in human history ; and the evolution of Hebrew prophecy shows a movement which demands that the prophet shall become, not by his word only, but by his personality, a revelation of God. So the Messianic hope becomes more and more a hope that God will manifest Himself in some higher type of personality. As these hopes seemed to work themselves out into a demand for the impossible, so gradually the springs of Hebrew religion dried up, leaving behind a semi-sceptical morality as one deposit and a very formal piety as another.

No less does the modern mind find itself being led to desire the Incarnation, and that, not only in those types who are without much love for nature or are inexpert in the inner life, but all the more where those methods have been tried and their benefits experienced to the full. The pilgrimage which is silently taking place to-day, is being essayed by those who have tried all the modern ways, who have made much of the inward way and tested immanentist doctrine to its last yield ; and they are beginning to find that very definite incarnationist doctrine alone suffices

their now thoroughly awakened natures. There come times when it is impossible to worship a God who knows nothing of life from our side of the veil. The very fact of His power and might, His omniscience and omnipresent immanence, shut Him out of sympathy with a life that has to be lived with the lack of these very things. It is not enough to have made this life and to have placed us in it ; it is necessary to know what it is like, and to do that He must have lived in it Himself. The attempt to restore communion with us on the lines of sympathy for our condition does nothing to reconcile us to God. The modern mind wants a deeper basis for religious trust, love, and worship than these things can provide. Omniscience cannot understand our limitations, immanence can never share our consciousness ; for the difficulty of life is the absence of omniscience, having to feel our way by faith, trust to intuitions, make experiments ; and the peculiarity of our consciousness is its limitation, its isolation. Only one who has known our life as we know it can ever be our Companion, our Friend, our God. Therefore men turn again and again from conventional religion to social reform, to human love, as a substitute. They become bitter and rebellious, and refuse to worship a Deity who issues commands from Olympian heights where temptation, darkness, and sorrow are unknown.

Finally we get the declaration that there is no God but man and nothing worthy of worship save Humanity. It is not within the power of Pantheism, Deism, Theism, or Immanentism to turn the flank of such movements or silence their complaints. We must have as a God one who has experienced life on our terms, or for us there is no God.

Even if one has worked through this rebellious stage and reached internal assurance and calm, there must sometimes come the desire for some confirmation of the inner life along the plane of the actual and the historical ; unless life is going to remain for ever cleft in twain, and the inner made a refuge from the demands of the outer. It is not that reason cannot justify faith, or that mystical experience is a delusion. But there is a deeper scepticism possible, even when reason and faith coincide, and even when the results of inner communion are peace, strength, and enlightenment : Reason itself may be doubted. After all, how do we know that reason is ever pure, that it is not rather " reasons " brought forward by that agile advocate the intellect, which can speak to any brief, that sophist the mind, which can produce the most perfect and yet the most unconvincing arguments ? How do we know that the machinery of the mind does not correspond to the external machinery of nature, simply because the one

has produced the other on survival-of-the-fittest methods? There is no proof that we ever get beyond ourselves. The effects of mystic experience may be due to self-hypnotism, the calling up of the reserves of self-consciousness, and the union of the finite and the Infinite still take place within the enclosed self. The doubt is irrepressible that there is no real companionship, no answer, no Other. Whether one warms one's hands at the Inner Light, or climbs to the heights of the Superman, no polite names, no comforting thoughts, can lay the fear that, after all, we are ALONE; forever incomplete, forever condemned to seek completion, and forever denied it.

How marvellously Christ comes in to answer this yearning, and to put an end to the final doubt! For according to the Christian idea of the Incarnation, Christ is an infinite Person, who is the soul of the world and the light of every one coming into the world; who nevertheless lived our life with all its essential limitations, fought our enemy naked and unarmed, endured our burdens, tasted disappointment, pain, failure, doubt, despair, and death; and yet won His way through to be the Lord of the world by the power of His love, and revealed Himself to be God through His true humanity and His great humility. And God, thus identified in Christ, His character revealed, His

nature disclosed, the Christian finds again in nature, but now more intimately and personally; sees the same sign of the cross and the same seal of forgiveness stamped upon both worlds; and enters upon a new scientific, artistic, and sacramental inheritance. He finds Him again in His own heart, not a mere light, but a personal Spirit, one with the Eternal and one with that Jesus who walked Palestine; so that the Spirit is shed abroad in our hearts, more powerfully operative, more intimately known, more intelligently obeyed. And not only so, but we now find that we have the key to all hearts everywhere, not only to those who are locked against us, but to those who have locked themselves against God and have lost the key. We know what they want and what they need. And in service of them we serve Christ, who stands behind every soul and is the Head of every man. There is now no possibility of distraction between the service of man and the love of God; between art and social effort; between the inner and the outer life. We find life is not only explicated in Christ but infinitely expanded. "In Christ" we find a universe, greater than the world of nature, the world of man, or even the infinity of unmanifested and unincarnate Deity; for He is through all, and in all, and over all these worlds. "Christ in us" reintegrates personality round Himself;

giving promise in this of regeneration for personalities tangled and disordered by the worst ravages of sin ; satisfying that strange demand of our age for some relief from the burden of personality, not by depressing or absorbing personality, but completing it by offering us His sacred Friendship and calling us to constant intercourse with Him ; giving us the use of those higher gifts which many seek in psychism, yet without its dangers, for they are gained not by submerging but by sublimating consciousness.

Here then man finds his rest ; a Self fronts his own self who is Infinite and Eternal, and yet has shared his temporal and finite life. Here religion and reason lock together in perfect accord, the age-long hopes and intolerable cravings of humanity are satisfied, the problem of personality is solved by a dual control. God has come to meet us at the only possible meeting place : the Incarnation. And in this, the Catholic faith for which the martyrs died and by which the saints have lived, we can stay for ever. There is more room and freedom here than outside. It is through this Door that we enter upon eternal life ; everything else leads either to a *cul-de-sac* or to the bottomless pit.



## VI

### THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO SOCIETY

WE have seen how essential Christ is to the full completion of personality, and, at first thought, the necessity of Christ to Society seems altogether disconnected from, if not contrary to, the personal need on which so much has been made to depend. The individual and society : these are the great oppositions between which history swings. Society becomes too repressive, and the individual must rebel if he is going to retain his personality : rebellion produces anarchy, and then the reaction towards a more authoritative social order sets in. Is it possible that Christ holds also the solution of these everlasting dissensions ?

It would hardly seem so, if Church history is to be taken as a test. Christianity had not gone very far before it found itself in conflict with the demands of an absolutist State. Allegiance to the Roman State had to be sworn in a form that involved the worship of the Emperor ; and this no Christian could yield. It took centuries of passive resistance, the martyrdom of thousands of Christians of every rank and sort, the endurance of every disability and cruelty, before the

State gave in to the obduracy of the Christian protest. The problem was then partially solved by a division of the realm between Church and State and a mutual recognition of the powers and rights of each. Yet there was soon disagreement and rivalry as to which was the superior power, Church or State ; and this was decided in a series of conflicts in which the Church emerged triumphant, having secured the recognition that hers was a supra-national and supernatural authority. But the victory, having been won by compulsion rather than by agreement, only contained the seed of future struggles, and the reaction came, this time with greater violence, not only ending in the assertion of the power of the State over the Church, but asserting the rights of the Christian individual over against the despotism of the Church ; so that the old disunion, so far from being overcome by Christianity, appeared within Christianity itself, leaving a problem that the modern world has been unable to solve.

In Protestantism, the insistence of the absolute freedom of the Christian man, and the concentration upon the individual consciousness of salvation, has not only not solved, but aggravated the problem ; while the Catholic insistence upon the absoluteness of the Church, stiffened into a defensive extreme by the fear

of Protestantism, is hardly one to which the modern mind looks with much hope : it is certainly continually causing individual rebellion and stirring national sentiment against itself. Protestantism is very often a form of patriotism. But the pressing need of social reform, the influence of psychological and anthropological studies, and a wider conception of Christian salvation, have combined to bring extreme individualism in religion, now discredited everywhere, into general disrepute even in Protestant quarters. Fortunately, we have already reached a point where it is recognised that the claims of personality do not entail extreme individualism. Personality is very largely dependent upon a social environment for its existence and development ; even individuality is not best cultivated in isolation, but in intense fellowship. And if personality craves a religious completion, we have seen that it cannot be gained by self-communion, or satisfied by intercourse with unmanifest spiritual power ; but only through Christ, who has been called the first personality, do we come fully home to God. But Christ can be approached, not only through the Gospel record, or through inward communion ; He is also ministered through the fellowship of the Church. When Christ saves us, He saves us out of our selfishness, our fears, our isolation, and

reintegrates us into society, first of all into the society of those who have been made free by Him, and who now constitute His Body, in fellowship with whom we find our life replenished and our faith confirmed ; and secondly, into the society of all humanity, in and through whom alone can we fully show our love and devotion to Christ. There is, therefore, in Christ a salvation of individual personality through personal relationships, that is, through the fellowship of society.

But the great modern problem is with society as organised ; for against this individuals continually find themselves in revolt because of the political, economic, moral, or sex disabilities it imposes upon them. Organised society breeds opposition in two classes : those who fall beneath its general level of morality and those who have passed beyond it ; it only suits the mediocre person. The movements of recent years make it clear that the modern democratic State is under threat of dissolution. Contending political ideals have reached a stage of bitter opposition where wrecking tactics and the threat of organised rebellion are more and more resorted to. The unrest of labour under the inequality of the economic order seems likely to proceed to a struggle in which the present social contract will be torn to pieces. The outcry for Female Enfranchisement has assumed a

desperate temper which has threatened to break up society on a new rock, and that the very rock on which life is built, namely, understanding between the sexes. And now the military defences to which nearly all States are committed threaten to involve us in a moral and religious opposition on the one hand, and persecution on the other, which, as history sufficiently informs us, means a choice between complete disruption and inevitable decline.

The truth is that the State as we know it, that is, society organised on compulsion, has lost the authority which was once conceded to it. It may bolster itself up for a time by an increased resort to force, but the result of that will be, beyond all doubt, only to call forth still stronger opposition. We seem to be faced with a future of revolutions and anarchies. It is very questionable whether political or economic readjustments, on which so many have set their hopes, will really meet the situation. Society has lost its spiritual authority, and knows not how to regain it. The appeal to force, to self-interest, to the necessity of preserving internal unity against external foes, to a theory of the divine right of the State ; none of these things are going to be much longer of any avail ; for the revolt is due fundamentally to the individual or the section being spiritually in advance of society. The trouble

is much more fundamental and the danger more imminent than is generally realised. Modern society is living on the slopes of a volcano. We are threatened with the break-up of democracy, the passing of modern civilisation, and the eclipse of Europe.

What is wanted is a new kind of spiritual authority which need not be enforced ; a spontaneous loyalty to that which transcends the individual and the nation, without abolishing either personality or nationality ; a new method of dealing with hostile forces both within and without the State ; the setting up of a Court of Appeal to which all can come and where judgment will be given to which all will submit. The only thing that could ever satisfy these conditions is the Kingdom of Christ ; His invisible Presence recognised as the unifying bond between all differences of race, sex, or station ; His love as the only authority in which might and right are one ; a spiritual power there available for the transformation of evil men ; and illumination gained for all our problems through the widespread gift of the Holy Ghost. All the social quarrels and revolutions, all the wars and economic strife, show that man has not yet discovered the true authority. And only in the realised reign of the God-Man, in the One who by His life here has gained for Himself immanence in humanity, will there ever be found any final solution

of our difficulties. The kingdoms of this world must become the Kingdom of Christ. It is not enough for the State to be Christian in theory or in motive ; the State as an enforced organisation must itself pass away before we can ever have peace. The State must disappear within the Church. This not only demands that all people shall first be Christians, but that they shall be such Christians as the world has never yet seen, realising the Presence of Christ more vividly than that of any visible person ; more expert in learning His will than in discovering the laws of nature ; more obedient to His authority than to any authority based on the compulsion of force, the reward of position, or the bribe of wealth. It must be acknowledged the coming of such a Kingdom seems very remote.

There are one or two things that need to be said about the apparent remoteness of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Christ's dream has certainly not yet come. It can be identified, not only with nothing in existence, but not even with anything that the present seems to promise. Not only does it seem to tarry unaccountably, but it seems only to have been postponed by its very approximations ; as, for instance, in the failure of Catholicism, and now, probably, in the threatened break-up of a semi-Christianised democracy and the postponement of that social reform, which so

many identified with the Kingdom, by a succession of war, revolution, anarchy, and poverty. On the other hand, things which have been long maturing may ripen suddenly; because the past has moved slowly the future need not. The break up of the very things in which we have put our hope may be, not a hindrance, but a help. The last desperate throws of a mind and order opposed to Christ may only prepare the way for a sudden universal turning to Him. Everything else is failing. The so-called practical, protective, prudent concerns, which have not only been a drag on Christianity, but have even cajoled it into giving them a divine sanction, are shown themselves to be impossible, dangerous, mere folly. The wholesale confusion of Christian thought and the fissiparous tendency of Christian forces may be themselves an actual preparation for a new simplicity and a fusion on a higher plane. The darkest hour may hold presage of the dawn, and the very failing of men's hearts and the chilling of faith be the signs of Christ's coming in glory. Modern biological research, philosophical thought, economic theory, New Testament criticism, have all combined of late to prepare us for the possibility of sudden movements of an apocalyptic character, history reaching the goal by a leap, humanity making the haven through a storm of unparalleled violence and

upheaval ; our darkened sky of doubt and confusion suddenly illuminated from East to West by a lightning flash.

But we are not entitled to assume either from modern thought or from the teaching of Jesus that the great surprise, the final advance, the sudden coming have no preparation ; the preparation is there and has been going on, even though the new outbreak may seem quite unrelated to what has preceded it. And it is plain that Jesus looked to the expectancy and the prayers, the faith and the faithfulness, of His Church as the means, at least, for bringing in the Kingdom. The failure of the Church has, however, turned men's hopes in another direction. They have looked rather to a general leavening of ideas until the whole of humanity is leavened ; to the gradual permeation of society by Christian principles, to the influence of Christian individuals living in the life of their times and in the society around them and acting as centres for the diffusion of the light. But the results of this have proved as disappointing as the failure of the highly organised and centralised Church. The salt seems to lose its savour. Christian ideas get diluted in this process until they are indistinguishable from the general conceptions of all well-meaning people. Christianity comes to mean nothing definite, challenging,

rallying. Persons are converted to Christianity ; but they find themselves in a social order, which they cannot change, and which soon they do not want to change, for they are involved and have invested in it too heavily. They may even become, while retaining a great devotional adherence to Christianity, the chief supporters and stoutest defenders of things as they are. They get into places of power, and we have hopes that they may redeem politics and Christianise the administration of the State ; but they often degenerate into mere politicians, and in a crisis they will direct their course by State necessities rather than by Christian principles. At present Christianity is losing heat faster than it can generate it, pouring its healing waters into a desert of sand which swallows them up and remains desert still.

This failure of Christianity to redeem the world by the leavening process presses us from without, and the present state of the Church calls us from within, to reopen the question of the relation of the individual Christian to the Divine Society, the Body of Christ. It compels us to consider whether the conception and existence of the Church is not essential to Christianity ; whether the whole movement of God's Providence does not make for specialisation before universalisation ; whether Jesus did not teach that His Church was not

to wait for society to reorganise itself on the lines of the Gospel, but expected it to form, within the existing order of society, a new order, based on almost inverted principles ; and finally, whether the failure of the Church has been due not so much to a false tendency towards organisation, as to an organisation copied from the legal and compulsory methods of the world.

Many are beginning to feel that, however inevitable, and whoever may have been to blame, the break-up of the One Visible Church was one of the greatest catastrophes of history. The protests of Protestantism may have been necessary, but they did not go to the root of the matter. With all its faults the Catholic Church has preserved certain essential ideas which Protestantism has only bartered away. It has stood out for the idea of a visible, unified, divinely governed Society. It has refused to admit that the Church is inferior to the State. It has ignored all demands from without to adapt its faith to the prevailing standards of unbelief. True, it has often done these things in the worst possible way. It has not stopped to ask how Christ's Church should be governed, but has taken over almost unchanged the idea of the Roman Imperium. It has attempted to force States to acknowledge its power by unfair use of interdict and excommuni-

cation. It has stooped to the methods of political intrigue. And, worst of all, it has not scrupled to employ the power of the sword. In fear of the results of learning and science, it has attempted to limit their freedom of inquiry, suppress their conclusions, and dismiss their findings without proper consideration ; thus striking often at the mere fruit rather than penetrating to the root of error, where error there was. And yet in all this it has been guided by a wonderfully sure instinct even when it has proffered the worst of all reasons for its action ; held to the true idea, while giving it the crudest expression ; saw far off the danger to human freedom contained in certain deceptive ideas, yet fought them with ideas equally subversive. All this wakes the wonder whether it would not be possible to have a Church which stood for all these things, but stood for them in a Christian way. There is nothing in Christ's picture of His society which says that there shall be no first or chief, but that all must be on the same level of attainment and position. On the contrary, He assumes that there will be these differences, but that the chief place will be open to the lowliest and will fall to the one who shows himself willing to be the servant of all. The Church, in her faith in Christ, ought to be in possession of absolute truth, or Christ is meaningless ; but there is no warrant

for assuming that this truth will be all at once explicit, can be expressed without great deliberation, when expressed will never need to have its expression revised, or need be promulgated with pains and penalties attached. The Creeds may be right : it is the anathemas at the end which have prevented their even being carefully studied. If the Church is following Christ, it needs no authority but that of love, no ambition but that of service, and no excommunicating power save that fire of the Holy Ghost burning in her midst which keeps out and drives out all who fear the fire.

But what is most important for our present discussion is that the Church alone possesses the power which can solve our social problems. Here is the real significance of the Catholic Church's obstinate claim to temporal power. It is simple apostasy for the Church to submit to State dictation, claim State protection, or seek State endowment. But it is equally wrong for the Church to admit that the secular State has divine powers. It was this admission that gave away in the very hour of their triumph all that the early Christian martyrs had died to win. No State has such divine power ; for any body of persons who are willing to go on paying the ultimate price can bring all State power to the ground. The Church should neither seek

establishment at the hands of the State, nor consent to deify the State. But neither will it be sufficient for the Church to boast of and still less to try to enforce her superiority to the State. What the Church has to do is to manifest the power which is superior to the State, and so exercise that power that the State will become unnecessary.

This means that the Church has to get right out of its present confinement to the sustaining of public worship and the ordering of the devotional life. It must show within its own borders its capacity for embracing the whole life of its members, show that its Gospel is, not only theoretically, but practically, capable of application to every true concern and need of human life. The gradual handing over of all secular matters to the secular power ignores the most obvious lesson of the Incarnation, reduces the Church to impotence, and establishes the State in tyranny. For instance, the early Apostolic Church practised some form of communism. That is surely not recorded for condemnation, but as an example. The failure of communism as revealed in various experiments is not to be thrown up against us as decisive, for they were generally without any adequate religious basis ; while, as a matter of fact, in monasticism, although with a motive that was not always Christian, and experi-

menting on only half a life, the Church gave evidence of the possibility of a completely successful religious communism.

It is certain that in the future society must find its way to a more equitable distribution of the fruits of labour, and there is no final solution of that until Labour shares not only in the reward, but in the responsibility. But at present Labour has not the leadership, or the loyalty, or the capacity for responsibility, and, as a secular movement, never can have. The Church has the spiritual power, but has suffered it to be surrendered, apparently on the theory that economics belongs to the devil. Somehow we must bring together the economic and the devotional, find how to seek the mind of Christ, not only for drawing up creeds, but for distributing work and wages. No Church that believes in Sacraments, and uses bread and wine as the vehicle of its highest communion, dare dismiss this task as something irrelevant; and no Church which has its roots in history and remembers its more adventurous experiments will dismiss such ideas as impossible. When the Church can display the spirit of Christ thus ruling and directing these practical affairs in which the world has so terribly failed, the world will listen to her spiritual message with a little more attention and respect.

One of the greatest difficulties of the State is found in

dealing with recalcitrants of all classes, and its weapons here are penalties of a more or less severe description, ranging from fines to imprisonment for life or even sentence of death. Until recent times no one ever questioned the right of the State to take this action, or ever dreamed that there might be a better way, but in many quarters the question has now been raised and must be answered. Is the State's only duty to the criminal that of punishment? It is pointed out that in many cases not only are criminals manufactured by the present order of society, but our penal system only further demoralises the criminal and perpetuates his class. Not only is society in some degree responsible for the existence of the criminal, but the criminal is often only an example of genius gone wrong, energy switched into rebellion. These non-respectable members of society might, with different opportunity and better treatment, have proved of the greatest benefit to society. The notion is gradually creeping into the minds of modern Christians that Christianity is not mere respectability. We need to remind ourselves that there have been times when the prisons were full of the more adventurous and consistent type of Christian, and there is no evidence that these times have finally passed away. In the great struggle of the future we may find persecution returning. Indeed, it is very

questionable whether any out-and-out Christianity would not have to be suppressed by most modern States to-day. Therefore the Church is compelled to look upon the criminal with somewhat greater sympathy. Christians have been mistaken for criminals; Christ was crucified as one. Criminals might make very good Christians: the penitent thief got into Paradise with amazing ease, and Jesus taught us that one repentant sinner is welcomed into the heavenly society with more enthusiasm than ninety-nine merely respectable persons.

Modern sentiment has slowly compelled our penal system to become less retributive and more reformatory, and the Church ought to be strongly behind that movement. But something more than Church approval of a State action is wanted. The Church ought to direct its redemptive activities more towards those classes which need her help, and waste less time upon the converted and respectable. The work of saints and evangelists in this direction in past years gives great encouragement for the success which might be expected. The Church ought to know something of the causes which produce the criminal: material, economic, psychological, and spiritual. The existence of a criminal class in any equitable society ought to be a reproach and challenge to her. But even supposing that social

reform and evangelisation greatly reduced the criminal classes, there might still be individuals who would remain a menace to society. And it is the danger of that which keeps society always on the defensive and frequently betrays it into repression and tyranny. Are we to be content to leave it to the State to punish these inexcusables? Surely they ought still to be the Church's first concern if she is to follow her Lord in seeking out those who need the physician.

The problem of the criminal is generally looked at from the point of view of the criminal, and this inevitably provokes the charge of sentimentality and moral unconcern. But no one seems to think of those who are told off to deal with criminals: policemen, warders, hangmen, magistrates. What is the effect upon them? In many cases it must be coarsening, degrading, and brutalising. To keep the criminal classes in order, you have to employ a class that, to speak with all charity, is not too far removed from the criminal stage itself. Churches appoint chaplains to prisons and other penal institutions; but, without judging a class by isolated specimens, or saying a word that might discourage some noble saints of God who have undertaken such work for the love of it, no one would care to maintain that such work ordinarily fell to the finest spirits the Church can produce. There is competition for a

bishopric or for a big Nonconformist pulpit ; there is little for chaplaincies and mission work. For tasks like this we need religious orders, where men would have the continual inspiration which comes from corporate devotion and corporate sacrifice ; otherwise they cannot resist the invasion of hardness and officialism. But so long as penal systems remain the Church ought to provide all the necessary officials and seek to construct along her own spiritual line a truly redeeming agency. If the Church desires to be excused from such a disagreeable task, it will have to bear the reproach of being merely a luxury for the respectable, of carrying on its worship in a protected area, and of depending for its freedom and quiet on the employment of a force quite unlike that spiritual power which it professes to regard as supreme and alone adequate.

This brings us in sight of that final and most tremendous difficulty, the settling of hostilities between State and State. We need not raise the question whether even on the political and practical plane war is ever justifiable ; that would lead us too far afield. But it will not be denied that the Church is supposed to believe in the existence of another power, which is alone able to overcome evil : that manifested in the Cross of Christ. Does that power only operate sacramentally within a quite alien kind of power, exist alongside it, or is it

destined to supplant it ? Whatever be the true doctrine of Christianity on this subject, it will certainly be found in the future that atheists, humanitarians, socialists, and Tolstoyans will increasingly refuse to take part in war. Is the Church going to teach that this is a heresy and encourage the secular power to extirpate it ? That will do nothing but increase their numbers, and will in the end only bring about the destruction of the State that attempts it and the decline of the Church that has recommended it. Or if the Church deals more gently with this error as an extreme passivism which is not identical with the real Christian attitude towards evil, it must go on to show us what the active pacifism is and how it works. The positive way of the Cross must be set forth otherwise than by preaching and sacraments.

Now it is obvious that before the Church can expect any nation to venture upon the way of the Cross, and refuse to fight its enemies with their weapons—which may be the only way in which the power of war or of any other evil can ever be broken—the Church ought to show the way ; and those are her opportunities when she is in conflict with the State, or when internal trouble tempts her to resort to force. On the ability of the Church thus to set forth the death of Christ the

hopes of humanity's deliverance absolutely depend. When she has attained that for the settling of problems which directly concern her own life, she may be called upon to lead humanity out of its bondage to war by the sacrifice of herself. It is unlikely that this redemption will be accomplished without some great giving up of her life. There are two choices plainly before her. She ought to demand that every Christian should be a soldier ; for the spiritual dangers of warfare are such that only the strongest can overcome them, most armies sinking to the level of their enemies within a very short time, besides becoming a prey to every form of vice and evil. Or she ought to demand that no Christian should accept military service. In the latter case it would only be right for the State to demand that the Church must provide some equivalent service. It ought to be her duty to organise her international forces to prevent war by all the devices of spiritual diplomacy, and if these should fail, and war should break out, the Church should be between the lines before the armies meet, there, if nothing else can be done, to perish in real intercession. The evil of the world is not going to be overcome by any easier way.

It is to be feared that these suggestions will appear

to some minds too heroic, if not actually insane. But the way of the Cross has always met with the same charge, and can anything else save a world that is rushing to destruction in what is even worse insanity? At least it will be agreed that the call to the Church is to save society by setting forth Christ. This must be done vividly, in teaching and sacraments; practically, in the attainment of Church Unity and in economic fellowship; sacrificially, in undertaking the hardest tasks and living on the exposed frontiers of life, and in being willing to pay the uttermost price of laying down her life for the life of the world.

This cannot be attempted save on the conviction that Jesus Christ is the supreme Head of humanity and the Lord of the universe. There must be no shadow of doubt that there is nothing in Godhead that contradicts what He is. It is not enough to believe that He has power. We must believe that He has all power in heaven and in earth; that He has all the power there is; all that really is power. This presents the modern world with a test of faith from which we may well shrink; but the time has come to show whether we believe or not that Christ is God. When He came before to reveal that and to make that claim upon us, He was crucified. If He is to be accepted fully now, it

must be on the understanding that the world is willing to be crucified this time. These are the momentous issues and they are slowly clearing from the confusion and agony of the times. The only hope of society is Jesus Christ. There is no other alternative. It is for the Church which believes in Him to show that her faith is something more than merely credal, but that she is willing to venture all on the faith that He is All.



## VII

### THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST TO GOD

WE have been trying to show that everything human, thought, religion, personality, society, cries out for Christ, and it is admitted that, from the human point of view, the need for Christ is so intense that if there had not been a Christ, man would have had to invent one. Yet all this leaves a certain sense of subjectivity, a fear that despite the necessity *we* feel for Christ, from the point of view of ultimate reality, there is no such necessity. We have to show therefore that Christ is necessary to any conception of reality; that He is necessary to God.

Now it is difficult for us to conceive, on any theory whatsoever, how it is possible for man to feel a need, and feel it so universally and vividly, which yet has no sort of answer in reality. On the most naturalistic theory of man and his dependence upon the universe, it is the universe which has produced him and created even his needs. It is by the pressure of his conscious needs that he is forced to explore the universe in order to get them answered. The consciousness of something lacking is one of the great factors of human evolution;

and the sense of need is the most distinctive characteristic of man. The real answer to that need must be already there in the universal scheme. Of course, man may imagine a kind of answer which is not there, but that would only be an answer that would not really meet his need ; but it is difficult to conceive how man should be able to imagine an answer existing which had *no* correspondence with reality ; or one that was higher, better, or more complete than reality can provide. For, on the naturalistic hypothesis, you cannot get out of the scheme more than there is in it. Indeed, the more you press the naturalistic hypothesis, the more you are driven to accept one of two conclusions, both equally disproving it : either that the naturalistic picture of the scheme is incorrect, or that there is something beside and beyond the natural scheme.

On the other hand, man *may* imagine something less than reality, may imagine that something less will meet his need ; and this is precisely what has happened in his thought of Christ. Christ, according to the Christian interpretation, is apparently more than man, before Christ, expected, and more than man, since Christ, always feels that he needs. It is only by reading Christ back into Hebrew prophecy, Greek philosophy, and heathen religions that we can see how they were craving more than they knew. And all down the Chris-

tian era the difficulty has been that men have tried to cut Christ down to a certain standard, which was all that they thought necessary, only later to find that they needed something which they had excluded. It takes very deep experience and a very wide thought for us to see, not only that Christ is all we want, but that we really want all He is.

The great failure of the modern criticism of Christ is its failure to grasp Him as a whole. All that the nineteenth century could do, and it was in many respects the greatest century history has known, was to make lightning sketches of Christ, paint Him in profile, take daguerreotype photographs ; and then show surprise that these did not agree with one another. This only shows that Christ is too great for our categories, that we cannot measure the magnitude of this Morning Star without striking an enormous parallax. It has only been through violent criticisms and obvious caricatures that we have been able to discover Him afresh. In a wild endeavour to get away from Him, we find ourselves coming back to Him, and in endeavouring to construct an anti-Christ we find that we have only constructed something that grows dangerously like Him. The conclusion is that Christ more than answers the total need of Him that any one of us feels. It would take all the ages and all humanity to reflect or com-

prehend this incomparable Personality. Now here is further confirmation that we are dealing with reality, that we have got quite beyond what we ourselves could have invented, that Christ is not simply created by our need, but is rather the cause of it.

The Christian creeds have expressed their sense of this and of all that it means by declaring that Christ is God. Now it is this which seems to go too far for many who are otherwise greatly attracted to Christianity, and who are prepared to give to Jesus Christ a very high place. They will agree that Christ is the highest Person that this world has produced, but they are not sure that He is the highest that may yet be produced. Here, of course, they are somewhat under the dominion of the doctrine of evolution. But the fact of evolution cannot be fairly pressed against the finality of Christ. History itself shows that there are many things belonging to the past which once attained cannot be surpassed, especially in the realm of art and religion. Evolution along these lines seems to have reached the zenith, as our desperate modern attempts show. It is questionable whether we shall ever see again minds of the universal range of Plato or Shakespeare : the development of man's mind is now inevitably towards specialisation. It is questionable whether we can ever surpass Greek sculpture, Gothic architecture, or mediaeval

Italian painting. If religion is true, and is man's greatest need, it ought to reach its supreme manifestation as early as possible in the history of the world. The Christ ought to come as soon as the world is conscious of its need of Him. Seeing the reception that He received, the tragedy in which His career was closed, and the far-off following of Him that is all we can yet manage after two thousand years of Christianity, no one can claim that He did not come as soon as possible. And it is less and less likely that Christ will be surpassed : ask those who have most nearly attained.

Now Christian theology holds that He is unsurpassable, because He is God ; and there is none greater than God. But all down the Christian era there have been disclaimers, refusals, qualifications, and limitations of this confession ; and the way in which they have been advanced, and the replies that have sometimes been made to them, show that the issues are not quite realised on either side. Unless Christ is God we have nothing which meets the religious need of humanity, and we really have no revelation of God. Christianity would only fail to meet the situation if it confessed to less than its full faith in Christ's Deity. But, on the other hand, Christ must constitute a real revelation of God. It is here where orthodoxy has betrayed its own position. Christ is not to be called God because of some philo-

sophical notion of what constitutes Godhead, but on the religious notion of what can be worshipped, trusted, adored. Both the orthodox position and the opposition to it have generally fought one another without ever asking what sort of God would really be worshipful. This raises the issue in a much more forceful way ; for if, on this basis, there is to be some difference maintained between Christ and God, then it is Christ who would be more worshipful ; for He has proved His love by living our life. It is not only that Christ may be exalted to the level of God, but also in order that He shall not be exalted above God, that Christian theology has been bound to seek for some kind of equation.

But even when orthodoxy has attained this confession it not only often fails to understand what it holds for mankind, but it almost always commences to give it away. The idea begins to be toyed with that Christ is only a part of God, which is what a good many definitions of the Trinity really imply. But if Christ is only a part of God, which the rest of God may contradict, then we are no nearer knowing God than ever. Again, the difficulties of the situation are supposed to be avoided by saying that Christ is that side of God which humanity can see and comprehend, that of God which is able to be revealed. Beyond this there is something

greater and vaster, the infinite which passes our thought. But in what sense is the rest of God vaster? It is critical for all our hopes that we should know whether it is a question of kind or degree, whether the rest of God is of the same kind, however much more there be, or whether it is something different. Is Christ the revelation of the very heart and mind, the very power and wisdom of God? Is there a power in God other than the power of Christ's love, a majesty different from that manifest in Christ's humility? Christ must be to us what makes God God, or we are still without assurance. Sometimes it is thought to be sufficient to say:

" God may have other words for other worlds,  
But His Word for us is Christ."

Christ is God as He presents Himself to this particular corner of the temporal universe. This seems to imply that there may be worlds over which Christ is not Lord, and to which He holds no clue. This falls short of the cosmic range which the New Testament gives to Christ, and it only makes us hope that we shall never wander into any such Christless world. Christ is our *heaven*, and we want nothing better. Christ is our universe, and the only universe in which we can ever be utterly at home. Sometimes the qualification is made that in Christ we have God only so far as God could be manifest in human form; that is to say, God under unusual

conditions and shorn of the attributes of the Divine nature. In Christ God is conditioned by humanity, and, so far, is in a state of humiliation : His glory is veiled, His essential nature revealed only through a medium which is itself the negation of deity. He is God only in so far as He could be God while He was at the same time also man. This is more readily admitted, and yet it can be held in such a way as only to plunge us back again into complete uncertainty. We know God, only in so far as He has accommodated Himself to us ; and how much this means missing who can tell ? If humanity is so contradictory of God, it may mislead us altogether. And yet, it will be said, we must hold that God is wiser than Christ, for He is omniscient and Christ was not ; God is more powerful than Christ, for He is omnipotent and Christ was not. But the issue is still whether the wisdom of Christ, namely, the wisdom of His humility, is a revelation of the kind of wisdom by which we are to conceive even the omniscience of God ; whether the power of Christ, namely, the power of love, is the kind of power in which the omnipotence of God consists. What is claimed to be more than these may very well turn out to be less. The love we cast ourselves upon as our final hope, the wisdom we look to deal with us, must be that which has drawn us sinners to Christ, or we have no real hope at all.

In all these qualifications we miss not only that which can allay all our doubt and fear, but we miss the joyful assurance of the New Testament that we have seen the *glory* of God in the face of Jesus Christ and that in His cross there was revealed the power of God and the wisdom of God. The New Testament sings on every page, because that which passes knowledge has been made known and the humanly impossible has happened. The reverence and awe which are the very salt of all religion remain. But the reverence is produced, not by the thought of what we do not know, but by what we do ; the awe is due to what the Incarnation reveals. We are humbled to the dust, not at the unimaginable greatness of God, but at the shattering disclosure that He is humble as a little child.

Now to secure all these interests of religion we cannot afford to rest simply upon human need. We shall find that it is when we try to think of the eternal being of God that we find it necessary to give to Christ an eternal place in the Godhead, and that it is not only the necessity of God for human life, but something in human life which is necessary to God, that gives the final assurance that in our humanity we have seen God as He is.

Now whenever we try philosophically to conceive God as He is in Himself, we find certain difficulties, not

only in the process but in the conclusions to which we come. Having arrived at the idea of God by a series of negations, in which we put away the human, the visible, the temporal, we find the idea of God with which we are left almost devoid of content. It is difficult to see how such a world as this could ever have arisen from so purely spiritual a Being, but it is also difficult to conceive that Being thus isolated as either self-explained or personal. In this solitary eternity, before the worlds began, what was the object of His thought? Was it Himself, the only and sufficient Object of His own Mind? We can hardly conceive of a consciousness unless there is something to be conscious of. And if in the case of human personality this is brought into existence only by social contact, we seem bound to assume, either that there is something similar in God, or that personality in Him means something quite different from what it means in us; whence we are back at the idea that God can never display in human personality what He is, and we can never be united with Him save at the cost of our personality. But even on lines of pure dialectic it seems necessary to conceive some differentiation within God: God as Subject, God as Object, and That which holds Them together in the Unity of consciousness. If this is only a logical necessity for our thought, even that must be some clue

to ultimate reality, as we have seen over and over again ; but the need becomes clearer when we think of God, not in logical, but in ethical terms.

If God is love, what is it that He loved in the silences before the worlds were made ? Here merely mental differentiation of Subject and Object is insufficient. To say that God loves Himself seems inevitably to reduce love to something less in Him than it is in ourselves. For the essence of love is to go forth upon another. Now it is here that the idea of Christ's eternal pre-existence certainly does nothing to complicate, but rather only to explicate the thought of God. It helps us somewhat, also, when we try to conceive of God's relationship to the world. To create the world from mere necessity, even of love, seems to make God depend for His perfection upon something other than Himself ; and yet to think of the world created from anything like caprice, and as an external thing not linked to Him by love, is to leave us in despair. The idea that the worlds were created in Christ, through Christ, and unto Christ, brings a certain help. The creation of the world becomes a movement on the part of God, not merely to satisfy or to add something to Godhead, but to reproduce, for our sakes alone, something already existing in Godhead. This enables us to think of the world having an eternal place in the Godhead in Christ,

securing it for ever in love, and making its purpose for our sakes ; while at the same time we are saved from thinking that the creation of the world through Christ was a realising of what was before only an ideal ; for that again would make the motive of creation God's self-realisation, a motive very difficult to differentiate either from external necessity or selfishness. It is for *our* self-realisation that the worlds were made, not for God's. With the eternal Christ the Godhead is complete in itself, and through the eternal Christ there commences the movement which is to give to creatures that glory and love which were His. That movement is therefore due solely to love, to which we have to add another description, lest it should seem like the same necessity and sometimes selfish craving that we know in human love, namely, the love that is also called grace.

It would be foolish to pretend that this makes everything clear to our thought of God, or of His relationship to the world. We can see only darkly, dimly detect some differentiation, and faintly discern movements and processes within the Godhead : more than this we cannot expect. But the thought of the Eternal Christ, especially when that is completed by the thought of the Holy Spirit, helps us to think of God in such a way that we can hold that there is something in our personality and in human society which is not the

contradiction of Godhead, but its earthly image. All this means that our hopes, both for ourselves and for society, are anchored in ultimate reality.

Is there any gain in our thought of God when we come to look at Christ as Incarnate ? We have seen the necessity of the Eternal Christ to God ; what is the necessity of the Incarnate Christ ? The necessity for us men and for our salvation we have seen on every line we have explored. Was the Incarnation necessary to God ? The general idea is that it was only rendered necessary by human sin ; that is, that it was a pure act of grace. We must be careful that we do not let that thought be at all diminished or surrendered. If we do, we shall find that we have traced human salvation to a motive which fails to justify our trust. Yet if we are going to see how wonderful a thing humanity can be, if we are going to realise that this life is no prison house, no fall from a higher estate, nothing in itself derogatory to highest Godhead, we must for the moment look at the Incarnation as necessary to God, correcting it afterwards if we find that it has endangered the issues anywhere. Just for the time we shall have to think very human thoughts of God, as indeed we always must. The Incarnation itself assures us that this is no blasphemy.

When we think of God as eternal, supreme, dwelling

in everlasting light, knowing all things at a glance, doing all things by the fiat of an omnipotent will, and then think of this life of ours, conditioned, fettered, darkened, we cannot resist the impious thought that a human being who struggles under the burden of this existence, gropes through its darkness, climbs against all the forces of gravitation, and, despite falls, wanderings, and setbacks, arrives at last at any sort of virtue, assurance, faith, is somehow more wonderful than unincarnate God. One wonders how a life so guaranteed, a power so undisputable, a light so clear and bright, can wholly content God. Would it not be more godlike to meet all the chances and changes of mortality, to face all the difficulties of temporal life without using omnipotence, to endure all the horror of depression, doubt, darkness, and despair, yes, even death itself, and all without relying upon the omniscience which could see beyond them; and then emerge sinless, come out conqueror, rise triumphant? It would seem the only way to prove that one really was God. Or think again of the indisputable rule of God, His sovereign right, His unchallenged might, the ease with which He turns the tides and makes the wrath of men to praise Him. The thought is once more irrepressible that it would be more godlike to surrender these powers and advantages in order to discover whether, as a man

among men, His kingliness could still be discerned, whether, when stripped of all might, imprisoned, pinioned, fastened, sealed by all man's force; nay more, when overwhelmed with shame and ignominy, with His call refused, His claims rejected, His love flung back with hate; whether then love could still remain love, and win its way to the hearts of the careless, scoffing, obdurate, rebellious, envious, until love gained universal recognition, humbled all hostility, was given the crown, and the throne, and the Name above every name, by the suffrages of humanity and the rapturous acclaim of the redeemed. This would show that Godhead did not depend upon mere priority, advantage, power, but upon its inherent character.

We can see that nothing but a real incarnation would give such a proof. It would not be enough for God to be immanent in human life, to feel sympathy for us, to know our estate only through the omniscience which understands all; for it is the essence of our state not to be omniscient, and only what is really incarnate can understand our state. It is the tremendous consolation of the Incarnation that God knows us as man, and that forever now Manhood is represented in the Godhead. It is obvious also that the Incarnation must be a real experience of manhood by God. If God dwelt in Christ only as He dwells in us, not living our

life from this side of the veil, it does two things : it takes us no further on in the satisfaction of our religious need, and it seems to make Christ morally and heroically superior to God. To mean anything for God and everything for man, the Incarnation of God in Christ must involve God becoming man, absolutely and *simpliciter*. Now this presents difficulties, not perhaps from the side of God's ability to be anything He wants to be, for that would infringe upon His omnipotence and deny that even love could find a way ; but from the side of Christ, who in this life prayed to God, depended on God, looked to God for all His help. For if He had not done this, He would not have been a man as we are, for these things are the essence of our manhood. It is incredible that in all this Christ was acting, or was deceived by his ignorance that all the time He was really God, and that there was no one but Himself to pray to. The doctrine of some differentiation in the Godhead, which we have found necessary for the Unincarnate, is reinforced here, and is seen to be a difference which must approach that of personality.

But this still leaves the difficulty on the other side. If it was only one Person of the Godhead that became incarnate, this seems to leave us with a certain moral inequality. Therefore we seem to need to have the Godhead in this experience in such a way that the

difference of personality we have posited seems to prohibit. The suggestion has been made that Christ, who in His Person was God, was only conscious of being man, but that subconsciously He was carrying on all the functions of Godhead. At first sight this looks not only irreverent but ridiculous. Yet it may contain more than we see at once, for we are here hindered from pronouncing absolutely one way or the other by our ignorance of the whole subject. We know that a great part of the machinery of physical, and even a great deal of mental, life is carried on without making any call on our consciousness, yet can be called into consciousness and is dependent on it. We can see from our Gospels that indirectly, and sometimes in moments of great emotion, Christ reveals a consciousness that is beyond the human, and that He claimed a knowledge of the Father that was unique. And yet it was while He was in this condition that He recognised a difference between the Father and Himself. It may be, however, that along the line of a difference of consciousness we may find some solution of Christ's earthly life as well as a clearer understanding of the distinctions that this necessitates in the Godhead. But just as Father and Son, Theos and Logos, Substance and Hypostasis are terms taken from human life which can only be symbolically applied to the interpretation of the interior

life of Deity, so this suggestion must be used with the same reservation and care. We know too little about it in ourselves; and some things belonging to the subconscious are anything but reminiscent of the Divine. We must be content with what the facts seem everywhere to support, and believe that, in Christ, God had a real human experience and that in our life God was able to reveal Himself as He is. It is within this area that the truth will be discovered. Where we cannot penetrate any further, it must be remembered that our lack of understanding is due very largely to our ignorance of our own natures, and especially is it due to our deficiency in love. As might be expected, the Christian revelation goes beyond what we can explain from our knowledge of ourselves, and yet it does so only in such a way that it helps us into deeper knowledge of ourselves. Christ holds the key to the solution of our personal life, and the differentiations in the Godhead, which the fact of Christ compels us to discern, hold the clue to the solution of our social life.

We have seen, therefore, that it was only as God was made man that He was manifested as truly God; that only in this life could He show forth His glory; and that in Christ He was His very Self. And yet we must guard this, as we saw, from the extreme applica-

tion that in Christ God became something He was not before, and otherwise could not be, or that the Incarnation was undertaken in order to satisfy or realise Himself. That only takes us back to a motive for our salvation which makes full assurance impossible. It was as Man that God revealed to us what He really is. He is the kind of power which was seen in the gentleness of Christ, His glory is the glory of sacrifice, His majesty is in His great humility. But God eternally is that, and He did not need the Incarnation to realise that or in order to prove it to Himself. The Incarnation was prompted simply by love for us, and through it all God was simply being Himself. And the only way in which we can secure that what He was in Christ He everlastingly is, is to hold that Christ, the very Christ that we know in the Gospels, was eternally in God and God eternally in Him. Christ is necessary, both as unincarnate and as incarnate, to God ; but He is only so as a necessity within God, a necessity of His own nature. Thus and thus only are we saved from thinking of this world, nature, and our life as a mere necessity for God's self-realisation, on the one side, and as the creation of something external to Himself, on the other. Christ holds us for ever in God. For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be glory for ever,



## VIII

### CONCLUSION

THIS has been a very strange pilgrimage we have been making together, if, indeed, any one has come with us to the end. We have travelled by unusual paths, but they all seem to lead back to the same goal. We have gone down side tracks which have been much advertised of late as the only way, but we have found that they either go nowhere and their end is the end of all things, or they bend round again suddenly and we find our feet once more on the old road. The more free and adventurous we have been in our thought, the sooner we have reached home. All this is very astonishing. We have taken those very considerations which are urged against Christianity by the modern mind, and we find that they are the best arguments for Christianity. We have followed out the most violent oppositions that our age has proposed, and we find that they only rush round the circle and come back all the more violently the other way round. We have examined the proposed substitutes for Christianity, and we discover that each one of them cries out for Christianity as its one hope. There is some truth in the older religions,

only if Christianity is *the* truth ; the only truth in the new religions is that which Christianity alone guarantees. We say that this all seems very strange. It might be suspected that we have really been guiding ourselves, not by pure thought, but by some secret attachment to Christ. It would be impossible for us to deny it. But then the purer thought becomes, the more we find that it has this attachment. It may have been noticed that when we could not see our way clearly we furtively consulted very old maps. There is no use attempting to conceal it. But the more we tried new ways, the more we found that they led to the same place as the older roads, only by a much longer way round.

Now this all means that we find ourselves back at something so very like traditional, orthodox, catholic Christianity that we cannot see what difference there is. If there are things we cannot yet get clearly worked out, we can see that it is within this area, and not outside it, that we must keep on working, because it is only here that there is room for what we hope to find. If the old orthodox statements concerning Christ are wrong in any way, it is not that they have claimed too much, but that they have claimed too little ; if they are obsolete in any way, it is only because they are inadequate, not because they were presumptuous.

Now this open confession that we are back where the

Church has been all along is one that may cause great disappointment to those who have a constitutional suspicion that nothing that is old can possibly be true ; and in others, who never would believe that anything new could be true, it may induce a rather unholy satisfaction that these adventures only prove that those whom nothing would tempt from the old home were right all the time. The one set will call us reactionaries, obscurantists, lost leaders ; the other returned prodigals whom they hope will be made to apologise and give some proofs of repentance before they are welcomed back.

Well we have something to say which we hope will somewhat comfort the disappointed ones, though we are not quite so sure that it will increase the confidence of those whose welcome of us has been at the best rather grudgingly given.

It is true that we have come home, but then that is what every one is doing who is alive ; for every movement of our times is running that way. Science, philosophy, ethics, are falling over one another to confess that the truth is not in them, but, if it is anywhere, it seems most likely that it will be found somewhere in the direction of Christianity. The great objections to Christianity are not modern, they are just a generation old. The modern mind has no objections to

Christianity. It has only a great desire to see the thing at work. This "great trek" homeward is not confined to those who have grown old and tired. It is being made by the new generation, it is a pilgrimage undertaken by the advanced and the revolutionary. The old heresies have developed into dead orthodoxies, the old freedoms have become dogmatic, the old rebellions have settled down and become conventional. If you want to be advanced, free-thinking, unconventional, revolutionary, there is nothing left now but to adopt unqualified Christianity. Those who have explored the nebulous religions of our time are most clamorous for full-blooded dogmas which challenge the existing order, the current mind, the established society, and they find that Christianity is committed to just such dogmas, which it is prepared to believe though all the world rejects them.

But our discovery is that orthodox Christianity is anything but conventional. It is riotous and revolutionary. We had been misled by those who professed it into thinking that it meant living tame lives, conforming to this world, holding safe prudent opinions about everything, demanding that if any change should be made it should be made slowly. But we can see that if Christianity is true, then most things that pass for truth in this world are lies from end to end; that if

Jesus Christ, the despised and rejected of men, the Carpenter of Nazareth, is on the throne of the Universe, then we shall have to turn the world upside down ; the days of the false gods men have worshipped are numbered, some of the thrones and empires of this world have but a short time to continue. Here is the Church holding that Jesus was Very God of Very God. We have been driven to make the same confession. But what we cannot understand is how, alongside that confession, it is possible to retain the idea that God is rather like a Magistrate whose sole function is that of punishing evil doers ; an Eastern Potentate with trappings of majesty and his dignity to maintain ; a Western Emperor to whom might is right ; a Millionaire who having exploited the poor must be hailed by them as a benefactor. If Jesus was God, then we know what God is like : He is like Jesus.

We are broken and made anew by this revelation of God, we know all the penitence, the awe, the trembling reverence, the sense of unworthiness which orthodoxy said we ought to feel ; but what has broken and humbled us is not a blast of condemnation, but God's call of mercy, not the infliction of punishment, but His bearing of it, not the disclosure of terrifying might, but the apocalypse of humility, gentleness, and the childlike heart. When we were told that Christ was

God it meant nothing to us ; no more than if it had been said that Christ was Zeus, Allah, or Odin ; now that we have discovered that God was Christ, nothing remains where it was, and there is a new heaven and a new earth.

We thought there could be nothing in the Nicene Creed worth troubling about, chiefly because those who recited it most frequently and fought for it so earnestly lived such unadventurous lives. We had devoured Nietzsche and fed our souls on rebellion, but we find that the Nicene Creed is more revolutionary still. We thought that any recognition of the Church meant that we must support unjust penal laws, the deification of the State, the present order of society ; but we have discovered that the Church stands for an utterly unworldly principle, has always been more or less suspected of sedition, and calls men to a way of life which would explode modern society to fragments. We felt that there was nothing but superstition in that word, *This is my Body* ; because those who believed it, and bowed before Bread and Wine on the Altar, were, generally, so strongly convinced that the working classes were only concerned about their bread and butter, and always said nothing could be done because you could not change human nature. We find however that the Sacrament sanctions a Christian use

of material things for spiritual ends and bids us to believe that the very economic basis of society can be transubstantiated. The Athanasian Creed was greatly repellent because of its damnatory clauses, and those who wanted its unexpurgated retention were always muttering "business is business" and "twice two are four," and held that inequality was the very basis of all social order. But when we came to read it for ourselves it seemed to throw mathematics overboard, with its declaration that One could also be Three and Three could be One; we found that the only Divine Order of Society was a Unity on the basis of Absolute Equality; and, therefore, that all society otherwise based would without doubt perish everlastingly. We thought that the Athanasian Creed was the last bulwark of things as they are; we found that it read more like the First Charter of Socialism.

Yet no one need fear that this spells bloodshed and means more violence is upon us. We have seen enough of the Christian sanction of bloodshed and violence. There is another power, the power of the Cross. There is another way, that of the Church. If any one has to suffer in the new redemption it shall not be the sinners who deserve it. We have not knelt at the Cross in such deep agony and penitence in vain. The new way will be for the Church to begin to organise its own order

of society without waiting for any further leavening and without seeking the aid of legislation. The example will soon make all other orders of society obsolete. There is a new vision in the old faith, an undiscovered power in the Holy Ghost. It is not that our age is returning to Christ. It is rather that He has come again, this time in glory and to rule the world.





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