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The person of Jesus Christ stands solid in the history of man. He is indeed more substantial, more abiding, in human apprehension, than any form of matter, or any mode of force. The conceptions of earth and air and fire and water change and melt around Him, as the clouds melt and change around an everlasting mountain peak. All attempts to resolve Him into a myth, a legend, an idea, - and hundreds of such attempts have been made, - have drifted over the enduring reality of His character and left not a rack behind. The result of all criticism, the final verdict of enlightened common sense, is that Christ is historical. He is such a person as men could not have imagined if they would, and would not have imagined if they could. He is neither Greek myth, nor Hebrew legend. The artist capable of fashioning Him did not exist, nor could he have found the materials. A non-existent Christianity did not spring out of the air and create a Christ. A real Christ appeared in the world and created Christianity. This is what we mean by the gospel of a fact.

Henry van Dyke, D.D. (Princeton, Harvard, Yale) LL.D. (Union) was Pastor of the Brick Church in New York. This excerpt is taken from The Gospel for an Age of Doubt. (1896) Hodder and Stoughton, London.

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Wisdom from the Past
THE EPOCH OF THE EARTH'S CREATION REVEALED

Edward Hitchcock

The Mosaic account of the creation of the universe has always been celebrated for its sublime simplicity. Though the subject be one of unparalleled grandeur, the writer makes not the slightest effort at rhetorical embellishment, but employs language which a mere child cannot misapprehend. How different, in this respect, is this inspired record from all uninspired efforts that have been made to describe the origin of the world!

But notwithstanding the great simplicity and clearness of this description, its precise meaning has occasioned as much discussion as almost any passage of Scripture. This results chiefly from its great brevity. Men with different views of inspiration, cosmogony, and philosophy engage in its examination, not so much to ascertain its meaning, as to find whether it teaches their favourite speculative views; and because it says nothing about them, they attempt to fasten those view upon it, and thus make it teach a great deal more than the mind of the Spirit. My simple object, at this time, is to ascertain whether the Bible fixes the time when the universe was created out of nothing.

The prevalent opinion, until recently, has been, that we are there taught that the world began to exist on the first of the six days of creation, or about six thousand years ago. Geologists, however, with one voice, declare that their science indicates the earth to have been of far higher antiquity. The question becomes, therefore, of deep interest, whether the common interpretation of the Mosaic record is correct.

Let us, in the first place, examine carefully the terms of that record, without reference to any of the conclusions of science.

A preliminary inquiry, however, will here demand attention, to which I have already given some thoughts in the first lecture. The inquiry relates to the mode in which writers describe natural phenomena.

Do they adapt their descriptions to the views and feelings of philosophers, or even the common people, in the nineteenth century, or to the state of knowledge and the prevalent opinions but slightly removed from barbarism?

Do they write as if they meant to correct the notions of men on natural subjects when they knew them to be wrong; or as if they did not mean to decide whether the popular opinion were true or false? These points have been examined with great skill and candour by a venerable clergyman of England, whose praise is in all the American churches, and whose skill in sacred Philology, and profound acquaintance with the Bible,

none will question, any more than they will his deep-toned piety and enlarged and liberal views of men and things. I refer to Dr. J. Pye Smith, lately at the head of the Homerton Divinity College, near London.

He first examines the style in which the Old Testament describes the character and operations of Jehovah, and shows that it is done "in language borrowed from the bodily and mental constitution of man, and from these opinions concerning the works of God in the natural world, which were generally received by the people to whom the blessings of revelation were granted." Constant reference is made to material images, and to human feelings and conduct, as if the people addressed were almost incapable of spiritual and abstract ideas. This, of course, gives a notion of God infinitely beneath the glories of his character; but to uncultivated minds it was the only representation of his character that would give them any idea of it. Nay, even in this enlightened age, such descriptions are far more impressive than any other upon the mass of mankind; while those, whose mind are more enlightened, find no difficulty in inculcating the pure truth respecting God from these comparatively gross descriptions.

Now, if, upon a point of such vast importance as the divine character, revelation thus condescends to human weakness and ignorance, much more might we expect it, in regard to the less important subject of natural phenomena. We find, accordingly, that they are described as they appear to the common eye, and not in their real language; or in the language of Rosenmuller, the Scriptures speak "according to optical and not physical truth." They make no effort to correct even the grossest errors, on these subjects, that then prevailed.

The earth as we have seen on a former occasion is described as immoveable, in the centre of the universe, and the heavenly bodies as revolving round it diurnally. The firmament over us is represented as a solid, extended substance, sustaining an ocean above it, with openings or window, through which the waters may descend. In respect to the human system, the Scriptures refer to intellectual operations to the reins, or the regions of the kidneys, and pain to the bones. In short, the descriptions of natural things are adapted to the very erroneous notions which prevailed in the earliest ages of society and among the common people. But it is easy to interpret such descriptions in conformity to the present state of physical science, as it is to divest the Scriptural representations of the Deity of their material dress, and make them conform to the spiritual views that now prevail. No one regards it as any objection to the Old Testament, that it gives a description of the divine character so much less spiritual than the views adopted by the theologians of the nineteenth century. Why then should they regard it as derogatory to

inspiration to adopt the same method as to natural objects?

Humour from the web

HOWLERS AND MISPRINTS

"What was the meaning of all the apparatus? Racks of test-tubes, most of them half-full: the microscopes on stands; the Bunsen burners: the white-painted box, on which was the word 'incubator' - what were these things?

In a flash of intuition, Creighton realised the truth - he was in a laboratory." Extract from a novel.

"By examining a salmon's scales under a microscope, the scientists can determine its age by counting rings on tree trunks." Washington Post

"Before the war 35 per cent of working women were single. Now it's the other way round - 65 per cent are married. A big change in women's lives." Albany Knickerbocker News

"Lamps must be long enough to be efficient, and the average length is likely to increase. Prolonged deliberation at one laboratory has produced the following rule on maximum lamp length: "No lamp shall be longer than the maximum dimension of the room it is intended to fit.'" Electrical Engineering`

"By an unfortunate typographic error we were made to say last week that the retiring Mr B- was a member of the defective branch of the police force. Of course this should have read: 'The detective branch of the police farce.' New Zealand paper.

"'The cause of death is a mystery,' the detective said, 'no doctor was attending him at the time.'"

Evening paper serial

Source: Parsons, Denys (1972) Even More Fun-tastic. Pan Books, Ltd., London

NEWS BRIEFS (From the Internet)

* Scandal in the animal kingdom: paternity tests philanderers

Keeping marriage vows was thought to be common in nature - 90% of bird species were believed to be monogamous. Paternity testing has changed all this. Faithfulness, it turns out, even over a single breeding season, is rare.

Why is this? The fundamental evolutionary reason is that monogamy is rarely in the reproductive interests of either sex. The neglected question is why there is strict monogamy at all. The usual answers (that it evolves when both parents are needed to raise offspring) don't always work. In Kirk's dik-dik the male merely watches his mate do all the work.

The truly virtuous can come from surprising quarters. The black vulture, a wingless cockroach, some species of shrimp and, unlike many of their human counterparts - the Californian mouse. The Guardian, 22 August 2002

* Space yachts

NASA is developing new technologies for space travel because existing propulsion systems are too expensive and too slow. More than 90% of the rocket mass is fuel. One approach is to radically improve "mpg". Ion engines are 10 times more efficient than chemical rockets. And they work. An ion-powered space craft took pictures of comet Borelly last year. A much more radical approach is to have no propellant on board at all. Solar sails work by catching photon "wind" from the sun - sunlight. The confusingly named plasma sails work instead by catching the solar wind - a stream of charged particles. Speeds in excess of 60 km per second are possible. 9 September 2002, Science@NASA.

* Crime related to early abuse and genes

A study of over a thousand males in New Zealand has revealed that children who suffer from physical or sexual abuse and who have a certain form of a gene were much more likely to fall into criminality than those without these factors. These formed 12% of the study group but were responsible for 44% of the crime.

The gene is for a "low-activity" form of the enzyme monoamine oxidase A (MAOA). The enzyme breaks down several chemical messengers in the brain - including serotonin and dopamine. 01 August 02
NewScientist.com

* Emergence of the H2O tycoon

Imagine having to pay big business to stave off your thirst. This is reality for residents at Nelspruit. Who gets the profits? Bewater Corporation. Water is very rapidly becoming a big business commodity. The turning point came when the UN succumbed to pressure from multinational water companies backed by the World Trade Organization. It redefined water as a need (that can be sold for profit by private companies) instead of a right (that governments are obligated to meet through equal access on a nonprofit basis). 21-27 August 2002, Features

* As shrewd as a chicken ...?

Chickens are not as bird-brained as you might think. Researchers at Bristol University in the United Kingdom have discovered that chickens are able to

learn from other chickens. Moreover, they are much more attentive to socially dominant birds than from those at the bottom of the rung. Roosters are very largely ignored. While chickens could learn to obtain tasty food, they failed to learn to avoid revolting food. There are limits to chicken intelligence after all. 12 September, The Guardian.

* Spinning gold from straw

It seems that Rumpelstiltskin was on the right track after all. Researchers from Texas have found a way of inducing plants such as oats to precipitate gold. All the plants need is soil containing the appropriate solvent. The method is cheap, and while yields are microscopic this is an advantage for the field of nanotechnology. The Christian Science Monitor 29 August 2002

* Strong-arm tactics of US tobacco firms revealed
How do you get consumers to continue to buy something that is bad for them? You buy off the opposition. The Merrell Dow company produces the Nicorette chewing gum that combats tobacco addiction. Philip Morris, the tobacco giant, bought chemicals from Merrell Dow's parent company. The purchase came with the demand that

Merrell Dow drop the anti-smoking message in its marketing campaign. Now all we need is a chewing gum that stops gum addiction. DiscoveryHealth.com

* Crafty crafts

Conventional robots rely on the if-then logic of the fixed computer programme. The trouble is that such systems are far too inflexible and unwieldy for unpredictable environments. Now researchers are combining neural networks, evolution and probability theory to create robots that can think for themselves. One prototype was able to autonomously negotiate the forbidding terrain of the Canadian Arctic. It avoided shadows so that its solar panels were always in sunlight and it knew when it was lost or in trouble. Another, a rover called K9, can examine rocks, do testing and decide what is interesting. K9 has been developed for Mars exploration. 13 September 2002, Science@NASA.

* Mystery of the Kuiper Belt Moons

The Kuiper Belt extends from Neptune to Pluto and contains numerous rocks (500 have been discovered so far). Moons have been discovered orbiting these rocks and this has created a puzzle. The conventional wisdom is that they are created by collision events. However, their large size relative to the parent rock makes this energetically improbable. 11 September SPACE.com

* Breakthroughs in stem cell research

Scientists are closer to using stem cells to treat such conditions as diabetes, Alzheimers and spinal injuries. Researchers at Princeton University have

identified genes that give stem cells their characteristic ability to develop into any of the 200 000 cell types in the human body. They have also discovered genes in surrounding tissues that direct the direction of this development. 18 Spetember, Med-tech Center.

Spot the Fallacy
OVERSPECIFICATION OR SEEING STARS

Mike L Anderson

I got mileage out of astronaut Mark Shuttleworth the other day. After discussing his space exploits and when my son, Nathan, looked sufficiently starry-eyed, I asked, "Do you know how he got his billions? Maths. Maths makes money."

"Okay," he replied, " $7 + 7 = 14$." He held out his hand and added, "So where's the money?" There was a glint in his eye (or was it a dollar sign?) and a mischievous grin over his face. We laughed. What fun!

Nathan had deliberately extracted more from my statement than I had intended. He knew full-well that my claim was meant to be taken in a more general, diffuse sort of way. I did not part with any money.

James Sire calls this fallacy of interpretation 'overspecification.' And it can come with a more dubious agenda. He (1) provides a prime example in a comment by Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, on Genesis 1:1.

Here is the text:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (NIV)

And here, the commentary:

"The infinite has no beginning. The word _beginning_ is employed to signify _the only_ - that is, the eternal verity and unity of God and man, including the universe. The creative Principle - Life, Truth, and Love is God. The universe reflects God. There is but one creator and one creation. This creation consists of the unfolding of spiritual ideas and their identities, which are embraced in the infinite mind and forever reflected. These ideas range from the infinitesimal to infinity, and the highest ideas are the sons and daughters of God."

There is some truth here, but it goes way beyond what the text is trying to say. The philosophically-minded will spot her grinding of the idealistic axe. The Israelities could not have been less concerned with the relative merits of idealism and realism especially while facing the harsh realities of the desert-wilderness! The theologically-minded might have

some questions about her view of God. I suspect Moses would have gone, "Huh?"

My favourite example of overspecification, though, is from a star-struck astronomer. He wrote "Early astronomers assumed that the heavens were confined to what they could see - sun, moon and a few thousand stars. All the while, Bible verses such as Genesis 22:17 and 32:12 and Jeremiah 33:22 spoke of an almost measureless universe containing stars as uncountable as the grains of sand of the sea" (2). He then points out that the total number of stars in the universe and grains of sand in the oceans has been determined to be approximately 10 to the power 24.

Superlatives can be awe-inspiring, I suppose. But how much of this is from the text and how much is the result of seeing stars? Let us take a closer look:

"I [the Lord] will surely bless you [Abraham] and make your descendents as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore..." (Genesis 22:17 NIV).

As one can see, the comparison is not between the stars and sand, but between Abraham's children and the stars and between his children and the sand. Taken literally, the statement is absurd. The earth, as any ecologist will confirm, cannot support trillions of Jews. The Lord was not surreptitiously advertising his astronomical Omniscience; He was using a figure of speech - hyperbole. Our astronomer's fallacious defense of Scripture is not the way to inspire initiated skeptics towards faith. At best it fosters the impression that God's children are dumb-struck; at worst it fosters blasphemy.

NOTES

1. Sire, J.W. (1980) Scripture Twisting. InterVarsity Press, Downers Gove, Illinois. pp. 63-64.
2. Ross, H. (1983) Genesis One: A Scientific Persepective. Wisemen Productions, Sierra Madre, California. pp 1-2.

* Feature article *
THE GOSPEL OF A PERSON
by Henry van Dyke

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

The adaptation of our central message, thus conceived and thus expressed, to meet the peculiar needs of a time of general scepticism, is the theme of this lecture. I do not say that this is the whole of Christianity. I do not say that when the preacher has delivered this message in this form he has fulfilled

all of his duties. He may have to bear testimony against errors of thought and vices of conduct; he is certainly bound to give encouragement and guidance to new efforts of virtue and new enterprises of benevolence in every field. But his first and greatest duty, the discharge of which is to give him influence over doubting hearts and strength for all his other work, is simply to preach Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF A FACT

This gospel meets the needs of the present time because it is the gospel of a fact.

Personality is a fact. Indeed we may say that it is the aboriginal fact; the source of all perception; the starting-point of all thought; the informing and moulding principle of all language. "All human observation implies that the mind, the 'I,' is a thing in itself, a fixed point in a world of change, of which world of change its own organs form a part. It is the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It was what it is, when its organs were of a different shape and consisted of different matter from their present shape and matter. It will be what it is, when they have gone through other changes" (1).

PERSONALITY IS THE FOUNDATION

This fact of a rational, free, conscious, persistent self is the foundation of all sensation and of all reflection; it is the basis of physics as well as of metaphysics. By contrast it gives us our first notion of matter; by resistance, our first notion of force; by operation, our first notion of causality. It is a necessary assumption even in the philosophies of agnosticism, positivism, and materialism. They cannot move a step without it.

"They reckon ill who leave me out."

To deny personality is to deny the possibility of any kind of knowledge and reduce the universe to a blank (2).

Moreover, it is not only true that the recognition of our own personality lies at the root of perception and reasoning. It is also true that contact with other personalities, conscious, intelligent, free, and persistent like ourselves, is the gateway through which we reach the reality of all external things. To a solitary mind the outward world may be only a dream.

But the moment two minds come into contact and communication, it becomes at least a permanent possibility of sensation. By comparison and contrast with the sensations and experiences of others, we verify our own. If it were not for this the whole universe would dissolve around us like the baseless fabric of a vision. The subtle analysis of modern

science, transforming the apparently solid elements into invisible atoms, and these atoms into vortex rings in the impalpable and immeasurable ether, throws us back, more and more, upon personality, subjective and objective, as the only thing that remains sure and immutable.

PERSONS ARE REALITIES

Persons, then, are the most real and substantial objects of our knowledge. They touch us at more points, they affect us in more ways and with greater intensity, they fit more closely into the faculties and powers of our own being, than anything else in the universe. A person who has influenced us or our fellow-men leaves a more profound, positive, permanent, and real impression than any other fact whatsoever. We live as persons in a world of persons, far more truly than we live in a world of phenomena or laws or ideas.

Now, in an age that is characterised, as some German writer has said, by "a hunger for facts," the gospel of a person, if it is rightly apprehended and preached, ought to have peculiar power because it is a factual gospel. We can come to those who are under the benumbing spell of universal doubt and say: Here is a fact, a personality, real and imperishable. It is not merely a doctrine that was believed in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago. It is some one who was born and lived among men. It is not merely a theory of God and the soul and the future life that sprang up in the East in the first century and has strangely spread itself over the world. This religion is historical in every sense of the word, as the actual fulfilment of an ancient hope, and the starting-point of a new life.

THE REALITY OF CHRIST

The person of Jesus Christ stands solid in the history of man. He is indeed more substantial, more abiding, in human apprehension, than any form of matter, or any mode of force. The conceptions of earth and air and fire and water change and melt around Him, as the clouds melt and change around an everlasting mountain peak. All attempts to resolve Him into a myth, a legend, an idea, - and hundreds of such attempts have been made, - have drifted over the enduring reality of His character and left not a rack behind. The result of all criticism, the final verdict of enlightened common sense, is that Christ is historical. He is such a person as men could not have imagined if they would, and would not have imagined if they could. He is neither Greek myth, nor Hebrew legend. The artist capable of fashioning Him did not exist, nor could he have found the materials. A non-existent Christianity did not spring out of the air and create a Christ. A real Christ appeared in the world and created Christianity. This is what we mean by the gospel of a fact.

THE GOSPEL OF A FORCE

And here we come at once into sight of the second quality of this gospel which is peculiarly fitted to meet the needs of a doubting age.

If it be true that a person is a fact, it is no less true that a person is a force. The world moves by personality. All the great currents of history have flowed from persons. Organization is powerful; but no organization has ever accomplished anything until a person has stood at the centre of it and filled it with his thought, with his life. Truth is mighty and must prevail. But it never does prevail actually until it gets itself embodied, incarnated, in a personality. Christianity has an organization. Christianity has a doctrine. But the force of Christianity, that which made it move and lent it power to move the world, is the Person at the heart of it, who gives vitality to the organization and reality to the doctrine. All the abstract truths of Christianity might have come into the world in another form, - nay, the substance of these truths did actually come into the world, dimly and partially through the fragmentary religions of the nations, more clearly and with increasing, prophetic light through the inspired Scriptures of the Hebrews; but still the world would not stir, still the truth could not make itself felt as a universal force in the life of humanity until

"The Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought" (3).

I think we must get back, in our conception of Christianity and in our preaching of it, to this primary position. The fount and origin of its power was, and continued to be, and still is, the Person Christ.

CHRIST WAS HIS OWN GOSPEL

This was the secret of His ministry. He Himself was the central word of His own preaching. He offered Himself to the world as the solution of its difficulties and the source of a new life. He asked men simply to believe in Him; to love Him, to follow Him. He called the self-righteous to humble themselves to his correction, the sinful to confide in His forgiveness, the doubting to trust His assurance, and the believing to accept His guidance into fuller light (4). To those who became His disciples He gave doctrine and instruction in many things. But to those who were not yet His disciples, to the world, He offered first of all Himself, not a doctrine, not a plan of life, but a living Person. This was the substance of His first sermon when He stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and having read from the book of

Isaiah the prophecy of the Great Liberator, declared unto the people "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (5). This was the attraction of His universal invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give rest" (6). This was the heart of His summary of His completed work when He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (7).

We are not considering, at this moment, the tremendous implications of such a personal self-assertion, unparalleled, I believe, in the founder of any other religion. We pass by for the present that famous and inevitable alternative, *Aut Christus Deus, aut homo non bonus est* [Either Christ is God or not a good man Eds.]. The point, now, is simply this. As a matter of history, setting aside all question of the divine inspiration and authority of the Gospels, taking them merely as a trustworthy report of a certain sequence of events (8), it is plain that the force which started the religion of Jesus was the person Jesus. Christ was His own Christianity. Christ was the core of His own gospel.

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH FLOWED FROM CHRIST

Read on through the other books of the New Testament, the Acts and the Epistles, and you will see that they are just the record of the operation of this force in life and literature. It was this that sent the apostles out into the world, reluctantly and hesitatingly at first, then and triumphantly, like men driven by irresistible impulse. It was the manifestation of Christ that converted them (9), the love of Christ that constrained them (10), the power of Christ that impelled them (11). He was their certainty (12) and their strength (13). He was their peace and their hope (14). For Christ they laboured and suffered (15); in Christ they gloried (16); for Christ's sake they lived and died (17). They felt and they declared that the life that was in them was His life (18). They were confident that they could do all things through Christ which strengthened them (19). The offices of the Church - apostle, bishop, deacon, evangelist, - call them by what names you will - were simply forms of service to Him as Master (20); the doctrines of the Church were simply unfoldings of what she had received from Him as distinguished from that of the Jewish Synagogue and the Heathen Temple, was the adoration of Christ as Lord (21).

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY CAME FROM CHRIST

Now it was precisely this relation of the early Church, in her organization and doctrine and worship, to the person Christ, held fast in her memory as identical with the real Jesus who was born in Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary, conceived in her faith as still living and present with His disciples, - it was this personal animation of the Church by Christ that gave her influence over men. Contrary to all human probability, against the prejudice of the

Hebrews who abhorred the name of a crucified man, against the prejudice of the Greeks and Romans who despised the name of a common Jew, she made her way, not by concealing, but by exalting and glorifying, the name of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it seems as if her career of conquest was actually delayed until that name was taken up and written upon her banners. It was in Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians (22), that the missionary enterprise of the Church began, and it was from that centre, with that title, that she went out to her triumph.

THE MAGIC OF CHRIST'S NAME

The name of Christ was magical; not as a secret and unintelligible incantation, but as the sign of a real person, known and loved. It enlightened and healed and quickened the heart of an age which, like our own, was dark and sorrowful and heavy with doubt. It was the charm which drew men to Christianity out of the abstractions of philosophy (23), and the confusions of idolatry darkened with a thousand personifications but empty of all true personality. The music of that name rang through the temple of the Church, and to its harmonies walls were builded. The acknowledgement of that name was the mark of Christian discipleship. To confess that "Jesus is the Christ" was the way to enter the Church. The symbolism of that name was the mark of Christian worship. The central rites of the Church were baptism into Christ and communion with Christ. Fidelity to His name was the crown of Christian martyrdom. Unnumbered multitudes of men and women and children went down to death because they would not deny the Christ. Whatever the early Church did, beyond a doubt her character and her activity were but the resultant of the personal influence that flowed from Jesus Christ (24).

THE PERSONAL POWER OF CHRIST CONTINUES

When we turn to follow the history of Christianity through the later centuries down to the present time, we see that the same thing is true. The temporal power of the Bishop of Rome doubtless grew out of the union of the Church with the Empire. The immense wealth and secular authority of ecclesiastics may be traced to social and political causes. But the inward, vitalizing, self-propagating power of Christianity as a religion has always come from the person of Jesus who stands at the heart of it.

CHRIST IS THE CHARM OF CHRISTIANITY

The attraction of its hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, the beauty of its holy days and solemn ceremonies, were derived from Him who is the central figure in praise and prayer. The renaissance of Christian Art sprang from the desire to picture to the imagination the visible, adorable form and face of Him whom speculative theology had so often concealed or obscured. The penetrating and abiding fragrance of Christian literature resides in those books, like The Imitation of Christ, in which the sweetness of His

character is embalmed forever. The potency of Christian preaching comes from, and is measured by, the clearness of the light which it throws upon the personality of Jesus. Read the roll of those in every age whom the world has acknowledged as the best Christians, kings and warriors and philosophers, martyrs and heroes and labourers in every noble cause, the purest and the highest of mankind, and you will see that the test by which they are judged, the mark by which they are recognized, is likeness and loyalty to the personal Christ. Then turn to the work which the Church is doing to-day in the lowest and darkest fields of human life, among the submerged classes of our great cities, among the sunken races of heathendom, and you cannot deny that the force of that work to enlighten and uplift, still depends upon the simplicity and reality with which it reveals the person of Jesus to the hearts of men. Christianity as a missionary religion would be fatally crippled if you took out of it the familiar story of Jesus and His love.

THE TESTIMONY OF A DOUBTER

"Mr. Darwin," says Admiral Sir James Sullivan, "had often expressed to me his conviction that it was utterly useless to send missionaries to such a set of savages as the Fuegians, probably the very lowest of the human race. I had always replied that I did not believe any human beings existed too low to comprehend the simple message of the Gospel of Christ. After many years he wrote to me that the recent account of the mission showed that he had been wrong and I right . . . and he requested me to forward to the Society an enclosed cheque for \$5, as a testimony of his interest in their good work" (25).

THE FORCE WHICH BREAKS THE INERTIA OF UNBELIEF

Observe, we are not constructing an argument. We are only tracing a force, - the force that flows from the person of Jesus Christ. The more closely, the more powerfully we can feel it in ourselves and in others, the more confidently we can come to a doubting age and say: Here is this force, intense, persistent, far-reaching. It has moved all kinds of men, from the highest to the lowest. What do you make of it? What will you do with it? Is it not the only thing that can lift and move you out of your doubt? For scepticism is just the inertia of the soul which stands poised between contrary and mutually destructive theories. From that state of impotence there is but one deliverance, and that is by force, the force of life embodied in a person.

THE GOSPEL OF A REAL SPIRITUAL WORLD

But the force which proceeds from the person of Jesus is not mere power, blind and purposeless. It moves always in a certain direction. It has a quality in it which produces certain results. And one of these results is an immediate and overwhelming sense of the reality and nearness of spiritual things. This is the third point of adaptation in the gospel of the

personal Christ to the needs of a sceptical age. It carries with itself an evidence of things not seen, a substance of things hoped for.

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

An aura of wonder and mystery surrounded Jesus of Nazareth in His earthly life. All who came in contact with Him felt it; in love, if they desired to believe; in repulsion, if they hated to believe. In His presence, faith in the invisible, in the soul, in the future life, in God, revived and unfolded with new bloom and colour. In His presence hypocrisy was silenced and afraid, but sincere piety found a voice and prayed. This effluence of His character breathes from the whole record of His life. It was not merely what He said to men about the eternal verities that convinced them. It was something in Himself, an atmosphere surrounding Him, and a silent radiance shining from Him, that made it easier for them to believe in their own spiritual nature and in the Divine existence and presence. He drew out of their fallen and neglected hearts, by some celestial attraction, spontaneous, gentle, irresistible, a new efflorescence of faith and hope and love. Where He came a spiritual springtide flowed over the landscape of the inner life. Blossoms appeared in the earth and the time for the singing of birds was come.

THE EFFECT OF HIS PRESENCE

Faith was not imposed on doubting hearts by an external and mechanical process. It grew in the warmth that streamed from Him. It was not merely that men were at their best in His company, except, indeed, those who were at their worst through sullen resistance and malignant alarm at His power. It was that men were conscious of something far better than their best, a transcendent force, an influence from the immeasurable heights above them. And to withstand it they must sink below themselves, make new falsehoods and new negations to bind them down, grapple themselves more closely to the base, the earthly, the sensual. But if they yielded to that influence, it lifted and moved their thoughts inevitably upward. It was not merely what He told them of His own sight of spiritual things. It was what they saw reflected in His face and form of that loftier, wider outlook. He was like one standing on a high peak, reporting of the sunrise to men in the dark valley. They heard His words. But they saw also upon His countenance the glow of dawn, and dazzling all about Him the incommunicable splendours of a new day.

This was the effect of the personality of Jesus, as He stood amid the shadows and uncertainties of human life; an effect strangely overlooked and ignored, often even beclouded and hidden, in much that has been written about Him by theologians and historians. I do not dream that I can put it into words. But I know that it can be felt as a reality in the Gospels. And I turn back to one who saw Him face to face, one who touched His hand and leaned upon His bosom, for the

expression of the soul-uplifting, faith-begetting wonder of the person of Christ: The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (26).

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS PICTURE

Nor has this effect vanished from the world with the removal of the bodily presence of Jesus. It has perpetuated itself by its own vital power, increasing rather than diminishing. It still flows from the picture of His life which is preserved in the Gospels, from the image of His character as it is formed in the minds of men. Eliminate, if you please, what is called the miraculous element. Make what allowance you will for the enthusiasm and unguarded utterance of His disciples. There still remains that enthusiasm itself to be reckoned with, an enthusiasm which was kindled by Him alone. There still remains the figure of the person of Christ, who never can be expressed in terms of matter and force, who never can be explained by natural and historical causes, who carries us by His own inherent mystery into the presence of the spiritual, the divine, the supernatural.

CHRIST UNIQUE

Something of this spiritual light, I will admit, - nay, I will maintain with joyous and firm conviction, - comes from every human personality, even the lowliest, in so far as it refuses to be summed up in terms of sense perception, in so far as it gives evidence, by its affections and hopes and fears, of elements in man that are not of the dust. But in Christ this light is transcendent and unique, because He manifestly surpasses the ordinary attainments of humanity, because He cannot be accounted for by the laws of heredity and environment. The more closely we apply these laws, the more clearly He shines out above them (27).

"The learned men of our day," says M. Pierre Loti in his latest book, *La Galilee*, "have endeavoured to find a human explication of His mission, but they have not yet reached it. . . . Around Him, none the less, there still glows a radiance of beams which cannot be comprehended" (28).

CHRIST SOLITARY

Historically He appears alone, as no great man has ever appeared before or since. Heroes, teachers, and leaders of men have always been seen as central stars in larger constellations, surrounded by lesser but kindred lights. Plato shines in conjunction with Socrates and Aristotle; Caesar with Pompey and Crassus; Luther with Melancthon and Calvin; Shakespeare with Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson; Napoleon surrounded with his brilliant staff of marshals and diplomats; Wordsworth among the mild glories of the Lake poets. In every case, if you search the neighbourhood of a great name, you will find not a blank sky, but an encircling galaxy. But

Jesus Christ stands in an immense solitude. Among the prophets who predicted Him, among the apostles who testified of Him, there is none worthy to be compared or conjoined with Him. It is as if the heavens were swept bare of stars; and suddenly, unexpected, unaccompanied, the light of lights appears alone, in supreme isolation.

CHRIST SINLESS

Nor is there anything in His antecedents, in His surroundings, to explain His appearance and radiance. There was nothing in the soil of the sordid and narrow Jewish race to produce such an embodiment of pure and universal love (29). There was nothing in the atmosphere of that corrupt and sensual age to beget or foster such a character of stainless and complete virtue. Nor was His own life, I say it reverently, judged by purely human and natural laws, calculated to result in such an evident perfection as all men have wonderingly recognized in Him. The highest type of human piety, the excellence of a beautiful soul, has never been reached among men without repentance and self-abasement. But Jesus never repented, never abased Himself in shame and sorrow before God, never asked for pardon and mercy. Alone, among His followers who kneel at His command to confess their unworthiness and implore forgiveness, He stands upright and lifts a cloudless face to heaven in the inexplicable glory of piety without penitence. Moral perfection of this kind is not only without a parallel; it is also without an approach. Men have never attained to it, and there is no way for them to climb thither. We can only look up to that perfection, serene, sinless, unsurpassable, and feel that here we are in sight of something which cannot be expressed except by saying that it is the glory of eternal spirit embodied in a person.

THE GOSPEL OF A SAVIOUR

But the force which resides in the person of Jesus is not exhausted in the production of this profound impression of its own spiritual and transcendent nature. It goes beyond this result of a vivid sense of the reality of the unseen. It has in itself a purifying, cleansing power, a delivering, uplifting, sanctifying power. The Gospel of Christ is the gospel of a person who saves men from sin. And herein it comes very close to the heart of a doubting age. The great and wonderful fact of this experience, which can neither be questioned nor fully explained, is not involved in the theological speculations which have gathered about it. The person of Jesus stands out clear and simple as a powerful Saviour of sinful men and women. In His presence, the publican and the harlot felt their hearts dissolve with I know not what unutterable rapture of forgiveness.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S CROSS

At His word, the heavy-laden were mysteriously loosed from the imponderable burden of past transgression. He

suffered with sinners, and even while He suffered He delivered them from the sharpest of all pains, - the pain of conscious and unpardoned evil. He died for sinners, according to His own word; and ever since, His cross has been the sign of rescue for humanity. Whatever may be the nature of that sublime transaction upon Calvary; whatever the name by which men call it, -Atonement, Sacrifice, Redemption, Propitiation; whatever relations it may have to the eternal moral law and to the Divine righteousness, - its relation to the human heart is luminous and beautiful. It does take away sin. Kneeling at that holy altar, the soul at once remembers most vividly, and confesses most humbly, and loses most entirely, all her guilt. A sense of profound, unutterable relief, a sacred quietude, diffuses itself through all the recesses of the troubled spirit. Looking unto Christ crucified, we receive an assurance of sin forgiven, which goes deeper than thought can fathom, and far deeper than words can measure.

"We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood."

This is not theory, this is not philosophy, this is not theology. It is veritable fact. The person Jesus, living with men, dying for men, has actually brought this gift of pardon for the past and hope for the future, into the heart of mankind. And from pure love of Him - a love which is first of all and most of all a sense of gratitude for this immeasurable service - have blossomed, often out of the very abysses of sin and degradation, the saintliest and sublimest lives that the world has ever seen.

Now this, as I know from my own experience, is the gospel for doubting men, and for an age of doubt; the gospel of a Person who is a fact and a force, an evidence of the unseen, and a Saviour from sin. Can we preach it? Will we preach it? Then one thing is necessary for us, a thing which might not be necessary, perhaps if our message were of another kind.

All knowledge, of the world, of human nature, of books, will be helpful and tributary; all gifts, of clear thought, of powerful speech, of prudent action, will be valuable and should be cultivated; but one thing will be absolutely and forever indispensable.

TO KNOW CHRIST, THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

If we are to preach Christ we must know Christ, and know Him in such a sense that we can say with St. Paul that we are determined not to know anything save Jesus

Christ and Him crucified (30). We must study Him in the record of His life until His character is more real and vivid to us than that of brother or friend. We must imagine Him with ardent soul, until his figure glows before our inward sight, and His words sound in our ears as a living voice. We must love with His love, and sorrow with His grief, and rejoice with His joy, and offer ourselves with His sacrifice, so truly, so intensely that we can say, as St. Paul said, that we are crucified by His cross and risen in His resurrection (31). We must trace the power of His life in the lives of our fellow-men, following and realizing His triumphs in souls redeemed and sins forgiven, until we know the rapture that thrilled the breast of a St. Bernard, a St. Francis, a Thomas Kempis, a Samuel Rutherford, a Robert MeCheyne; the chivalrous loyalty that animated a Henry Have-lock, a Charles Kingsley, a Frederick Robert-son, a Charles Gordon; the deep devotion that strengthened a David Brainerd, a Henry Martyn, a Coleridge Patteson. We must become the brothers of these men through brotherhood with Christ. We must kindle our hearts in communion with Him, by meditation, by prayer, and by service, which is the best kind of prayer. No day must pass in which we do not do something distinctly in Jesus' name, for Jesus' sake. We must go where He would go if He were on earth. We must try to do what He would do if He were still among men. And so, by our failure as well as by our effort, by the very contrast between our incompleteness and His perfection, the image of our Companion and our saving Lord will grow radiant and distinct within us. We shall know that potent attraction which His person has exercised upon the hearts of men, and feel in our breast that overmastering sense of loyalty to Him, which alone can draw us to follow Him through life and death.

"If Jesus Christ is a man, -
 And only a man, - I say
 That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
 And to him will I cleave alway.

"If Jesus Christ is a God, -
 And the only God, -I swear
 I will follow him through heaven and hell,
 The earth, the sea, and the air" (32).

NOTES

1. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Liberty Equality, Fraternity. Quoted by Hutton, Contemporary Thought, I., P. 114.
2. Alfred Williams Momerie, Personality, the Beginning and End of Metaphysics (Blackwood, 1889), pp.23, 132.
3. Tennyson, In Memoriam, xxxvi.
4. Henry Lathan, Pastor Pastoryum (New York, James Pott & Co., 1891), pp.273-275.
5. Luke 4:16-21
6. Matthew 11:28
7. John 12:32

8. The evidence for the historic trustworthiness of the Gospels may be found summed up in its modern form in Dr. Salmon's Introduction to the New Testament, fourth edition (New York, Young & Co., 1889); in Bishop Lightfoot's Essays on "Supernatural Religion" (Macmillan, 1889); in Beyschlag's New Testament Theology (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1895), pp.29-31, 216-221 of volume i.; and in Prof. George P. Fisher's Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief (Scribners, 1883).
9. Galatians 1:16.
10. 2 Corinthians 5:14
11. 2 Timothy. 1:12
12. Ephesians 2: 14.
13. Colossians 1:27
14. Philippians 3:8-10
15. Galatians 6:14
16. 2 Corinthians 4:5,11
17. Galatians 2:20
18. Philippians 4:13
19. Ephesians 4:8-12
20. 1 Corinthians 9:1,23; 15:3
21. Philippians 2:11; 1 Corinthians 12:3
22. Acts 11: 26; 13: 1-3.
23. See Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, chap. viii.
24. George B. Stevens, The Pauline Theology (New York, Scribners, 1892), pp.321-323.
25. Alfred Barry, Some lights of Science on the Faith (London, Longmans, 1892), p.116.
26. John 1: 14.
27. J.S. Mill, Essays on Religion, p.253.
28. Pierre Loti, La Galilee (Paris, 1895), p.93.
29. Amory H. Bradford, Heredity and Christian Problems (New York, Macmillan, 1895), p. 266.
30. 1 Corinthians 2: 2.
31. Galatians 2: 20.
32. Richard Watson Gilder, "Song of a Heathen, sojourning in Galilee, A.D. 32."

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