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## THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN MODERN THOUGHT.

*A paper read to the Northern Baptist Fraternal Conference at Stocksfield-on-Tyne, October, 1925.*

**K**EEPING in mind that there are no clean breaks in the history of thought, but that one period slowly dissolves into the next the distinguishing marks of which only gradually dawn, we may attempt to realize the marks of modern thought. Modern thought on the Person of Christ is wholly Protestant. A change began at the Reformation which set thought free from ecclesiastical authority. Progress since the Reformation has, in general, been a movement of life. Personal experience rather than dogmatic definition has become the touch-stone of truth. We now think in terms of personality and experience. Hence the point of view has completely changed since the ancient controversies. They were far more objective: substance was their favourite term: "Of one substance with the Father," was their credal statement about the Person of Christ. For us, however, consciousness and conscious beings are the founts of reality. While being far from completely subjective experience has a greater place in modern thought about Christ. Thus necessity is laid upon us to think out the meaning of Christ afresh from the new standpoint. We cannot use the old terms without most careful enquiry for they have gone out of

general currency like Roman coins. As Dr. Fairbairn wrote: "We all feel the distance placed by fifty years (more now) of the most radical and penetrating critical discussions between us and the older theology, and as the distance widens the theology that then reigned grows less credible because less relevant to living mind" (1). *Here is our modern criterion: relevancy to living mind.* Two other marks must not be omitted. The field is wider than ever and no longer confined to the Bible or to the teaching of the Church. The method of approach is scientific. Here the keynote is discipline. The first aim is a thoroughly disinterested investigation of facts. Theory must wait upon securely ascertained facts and build on no other basis.

Interest in the Person of Christ was aroused by a discussion on His Divinity. It would seem best, therefore, to view modern thought about Christ from the ultimate point of view rather than sketch the history. Taken thus our subject divides naturally according to views held by thinkers regarding ultimate truth. The limits of this paper make inadequacy of treatment unavoidable.

I. First comes pure speculation where thought is the way to the absolute point of view. Here Hegel is the beacon light, and the guiding principle is logical.

Progress in Hegel's system is, like walking, a continual recovery of balance. We affirm a simple truth to be the whole truth, and that very affirmation brings out prominently another antithetic truth. This step leads to yet another truth which embraces the former two in a new synthesis. The ultimate synthesis is the Idea. The absolute, which is less than the Idea, became objective in Nature, and the final step was taken when Nature produced self-conscious Spirit. Thus God the immanent Principle of all becomes personal and self-conscious in humanity which is an essential and necessary part of God. God and man are essentially one. *Christ is the perfect expression of that oneness.* Humanity was set free by this demonstration of divine indwelling, and salvation comes by realizing this oneness which Christ has demonstrated.

What are we to say to this? It is unacceptable because it is out of relation with historic fact. In the New Testament Jesus knows Himself to be distinctively

1. Christ in Modern Theology, page 296.

Son rather than realized Idea. Again, in Hegel's view sin is a necessary step in a process, not a break, and salvation is not the forgiveness of sin, but the realization of unity with the immanent God. The significance of Jesus is that He was the first to see and realize this essential unity of God and man. The absolute manifestation of God is found in the world-process not in a Person. The weakness of the Hegelian view is its superiority to history. In words of Dr. H. R. Mackintosh: "When once the Gospel has been severed from a historic person and identified with a complex of metaphysical ideas what it ought to be called is scarcely worth discussion, that it is no longer Christianity is clear" (2).

We enter a much warmer stream of thought in Schleiermacher. Here the key to the absolute is religion. What reason is to Hegel religion is to Schleiermacher. By religion he means something entirely *sui generis*. Religion cannot be resolved into anything else whatever. It speaks in its own right and carries its own authority. The heart of religion is a sense of dependence. In a translation of his own words: "The whole religious life consists of two elements, that man surrender himself to the Universe and allow himself to be influenced by the side of it that is turned towards him is one part, and that he transplant this contact which is one definite feeling within, and take it up into the inner unity of his life and being, is the other" (3).

How natural, therefore, to find Schleiermacher writing that the notable thing about Jesus is "the splendid clearness with which the idea He had come to represent shaped itself in His soul, the idea that all that is finite needs the help of something higher to be connected with the Deity; and that for the man who is entangled in the finite and particular, salvation is to be sought only in redemption" (4). This consciousness of His cannot be explained by natural causes: it was supernatural. In this system Jesus is unique, a new and original creation of God, a fountain head of new life. *The important point was the consciousness of Jesus.* Schleiermacher has no room for the pre-

2. The Person of Christ, page 259.

3. See Schleiermacher on Religion: Speeches to its cultured despisers, translated by Rev. J. Oman, B. D.

4. Quoted in D. C. G., vol. 2, page 871.

existence or miraculous birth, or bodily resurrection of Jesus.

There is much here to welcome *e.g.*, the insistence that religion be allowed to speak for itself, and that it is to be found in a sense of dependence. The emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ's consciousness too is welcome. But Schleiermacher says more about consciousness than the person who is conscious, and so avoids the real problem. It has been said: "He failed even in his acute analysis of the process of consciousness to find the personality which is conscious. His account of experience . . . . is felt as a stream with no containing banks" (5). There is a strong dose of Pantheism in his thought and the smudging of real distinctions to which Pantheism leads. He makes a real contribution, but we cannot rest in him.

II. The next great thinker on our subject, Ritschl, denies that we can reach ultimate reality. Philosophically he is agnostic. He is interested in a circle of light bounded by deep shadows. The circle is our experience and the light is shed by the value we place on the facts of experience. The essence of religion is found in certain judgments of value. Belief in God arose through man's felt need of help in life's unequal struggle. This God is actually revealed in Jesus Christ. We know nothing of Christ either before or after His historical manifestation in the flesh, but in that manifestation *He has for us the value of God*. Below that we cannot place his unshakeable faith, obedience and love. Thus Christ is the Son of God, not in a metaphysical sense, but as the expression of supreme worth for Christian souls.

The question, Can we justify supreme worth without entering into metaphysics? arises here. As Dr. Galloway has pointed out: "We cannot arbitrarily confer a value on any object whatever" (6). There is a certain inevitable objectivity in the doctrine of values, that is to say, values are bound up with goods. A good is more than a subjective appreciation of value, it has objectivity, its value is intrinsic. Now Jesus is not a value merely, but a good. It is not our subjective feeling towards Him only that gives Him His value, but His own intrinsic good. There is an

5. Douglas Mackenzie, E.R.E., vol. 7, page 542.

6. Religion and Modern Thought, page 196 f.

unavoidable "relation between the realm of value and that of existences" (7). We cannot then, rest in a judgment of value without enquiring into the ground of our valuation and that inevitably leads into metaphysics. Ritschl's emphasis on the supreme worth of Christ is true to Christian experience, but other questions abide to which he can give us no satisfactory answer.

III. Another stream of thought has flowed along with those we have been considering in which the orthodox idea of the Trinity forms the ultimate background. Here the Divinity of Christ is not in question, but rather how the Divine can exist under the conditions of human nature. A distinction is made in the attributes of God. Some are essential, others, springing from God's relation to the creation, are not so. These latter are omniscience and omnipotence. The essential attributes are truth, holiness, love. In a true incarnation the essential attributes—truth, holiness, love—would be found, but not the unessential. This is what we find in Christ. In becoming man He surrendered no essential attribute of God, but He did empty Himself of the unessential.

Dr. Bruce calls this Kenotic Theory 'protean' and truly its changes are many. The extreme form is in Gess who holds that Christ entered human life through a night of complete darkness and gave up all, slowly recovering through the experiences of His human life. In other forms of the theory Jesus surrenders the physical attributes in order to realize the godlike qualities under human conditions. In other forms, again the attributes of God—all of them—are simply transplanted into human conditions so that omniscience becomes "the sure exercise of perfect human faculty," and omnipotence is seen in "subdued action" demanded by human conditions.

The Kenotic Theory seeks to do justice to two sides of the Gospel. "It was as if they said . . . . this which He became is unintelligible except by contrast with what He had been. He did not remain all that He was in the pre-existent glory, but stooped down, by a real self-surrender and self-impoverishment and took a lower place. In the light of that renunciation we get a new glimpse of the lengths to which Divine love will go for man's

redemption. This, I believe to be the profoundest motive operating in the Kenotic theories" (8). The contention that "if the Infinite God was so constituted that He could not live also as a finite man, then He was not infinite" (Forsyth) seems to be undeniably true. A Kenosis seems quite possible to the Infinite God. The appeal to the historic records is a strong point in this theory. Where it is weakest is in its confident assertions about the Infinite God—a realm where the power of the finite mind of man is like an attempt to explore the ocean by night with a burning match.

A few minor movements may bring this sketch to a close. The *Eschatologists* make Jesus the subject of an illusion—a result which seems like a *reductio ad absurdum* in the case of One who so clearly showed exceptional insight into other people's lives and was right on their own confession. Can He who so clearly read the lives of others have been completely wrong about His own? *Psychology* gives no help. It takes to pieces that which has no parts except for abstract thought. Personality in its completeness is beyond its reach. The *Christian Science* view of Jesus is a return to Docetism. *Social reformers* pay honour to certain sides of the life of Jesus, but it cannot be said that they are greatly interested in His Person.

IV. In review of the modern period we may say that the Person of Jesus has been removed from the shelter of the Church and subjected to the strongest winds of criticism that can blow, with this notable result that "the most destructive efforts became the conditions of the most constructive achievements" (9). During this process it has been confidently asserted that just as quite common string can gather crystals out of a saturated solution, so Jesus gathered around Him ideas which were in solution (so to speak) in His day. It mattered not to these thinkers if He were but common string, or even, indeed, in extreme advocates of the position, if He were proved never to have lived at all. The ideas matter and not the person round whom they gather. From this extreme the advance has been sure and steady till to-day, no one of repute would deny

8. H. R. Mackintosh, *Person of Christ*, page 265.

9. Fairbairn, *Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p 294.

that there is a Jesus of History. We may say with Browning:

“That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes, but to recompose.”

“We now stand face to face with Him in a sense and to a degree unknown in the Church since the Apostolic Age”<sup>(10)</sup>.

We are forced to ask: “How do you estimate Him, holding sixty generations in His spiritual mastership, and making men of twenty centuries feel that when they tried to comprehend Him, they were trying to mete out heaven with a span?”<sup>(11)</sup>.

The following points would seem to demand a place in any real answer.

*Jesus or no one is our teacher.* We must listen to Him for an answer. We cannot dictate to Him.

*We cannot brush aside what He thought about Himself.* He made great claims naturally, and exercised them unflinchingly. Must we not agree that “if it is not superhuman authority that speaks to us here it is superhuman arrogance?”<sup>(12)</sup> Is there not something in the dilemma seen and pressed from early days that Jesus was “either God or not a good man?”

It seems clear too that *we cannot separate Person from work.* A musician is sensitive to discord as no other is, an artist to ugliness. It is said of a certain musician (though I cannot verify the story it is psychologically true) that once when he was ill some pupil struck a discord on a piano within the master’s hearing and left it unresolved into harmony. It tortured the musician so much that he felt compelled to totter downstairs, seat himself at the instrument, and play the chords needed to bring the discord to harmony. Following this line of thought surely Jesus must have been sensitive to sin as no other could be because of His perfect moral life. He claimed to die for its forgiveness, “a ransom for many.” The Cross was the achievement of His life and is bound up with it all inextricably. As some has somewhere asked: “Did He die for a metaphor?” If we accept the testimony of the

10. Ibid, page 295.

11. Fosdick, *Manhood of the Master*, page 156.

12. Quoted by Gore, *Bampton Lectures*. note to page 16.

musician and the artist must we not accept the testimony of Jesus that "He was one with God?"

After all His challenge is still real and unavoidable. *No adequate answer can use any other term than Sonship.* Was this Sonship ultimate, in the nature of God, metaphysical? "It is open to the radical theologian to say that the positing of a metaphysical union with God as the basis of the unique consciousness and character of Jesus is a subsequent explanation which Paul and John have given. But it is an explanation, and the mere assertion that Jesus consciousness was 'purely human' is not" (13).

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13. G. B. Stevens, *New Testament Theology*, page 64 1st edition.



#### THAT MONDAYISH FEELING.

*A Paper read at a Fraternal in West London.*

TWO months ago I had a narrow escape. It seemed inevitable that I should submit to a law which is as inexorable as the law of the Medes and Persians. By a lucky chance the law lagged—and like a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler I was free. It is true the freedom was shortlived—but for the time it was sweet.

Those who were present on the occasion to which I refer will remember that I owed my escape mainly to "that Mondayish feeling" which was adduced as a sufficient reason why a set paper at our Fraternal gatherings should be abandoned.

As I was absent last month, I am at a loss to know in what way my friend responsible for opening the discussion bungled his opportunity. I can only surmise that the fault (if any) lay, not with his presentation of his Pastoral Problems—but was entirely due to the fact that on Monday afternoon my learned brethren found themselves wholly unable to cope with them. All things are not for all times.

“To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up.”

“I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.”

So the return to our time-honoured rule—the law of our fraternity—no less than the brief departure from it—must, I take it, be credited to the account of “that Mondayish feeling,” which in a gathering of this kind is sufficiently defined in the phrase itself without any further words.

This last remark rather plays havoc with what I had supposed would be suitable divisions for the subject viz. :

1. What it is. 2. How it works. 3. How it must be dealt with.

These are *not* my divisions, but they will probably help in the discussion.

That Mondayish feeling is very definitely related both to the soul and the body, and in certain cases it may result from spiritual causes alone. In other cases it is probable that the Mondayish feeling may be ascribed to causes that are wholly physical.

The second division—“How it works” (or doesn’t work)—will give an opportunity to everybody, since there are few preachers who escape “that Mondayish feeling” altogether.

And the third division will give us an opportunity of sitting at the feet of our friend and host whose vocation in life it is to give suitable direction to those who essay the high tasks of the Christian ministry. He perhaps will tell us how it should be dealt with—either in the way of prevention or cure.

On a Monday morning we are in a fitting mood to read R.L.S’s “Apology for Idlers.” All his arguments carry weight. And we are specially impressed by his dictum that “Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain

that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do."

And we can even laugh with him when he solemnly pokes fun at dear old Atlas declaring that "Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare!"

Truly the servant of God bears the world upon his shoulders—or rather let us say "the burden of the Lord" is upon our soul. And doubtless, after the efforts of the previous day it is excusable if he should feel himself inadequate to his task. "Who is sufficient for these things?"

But it is not excusable that any of us should appear simply as gentlemen with a protracted nightmare.

If a man has been faithful—and if he has had what preachers describe as "a good time"—he may well feel that "virtue has gone out of him." There will probably be a feeling of physical exhaustion—and maybe of mental and spiritual exhaustion also.

Indeed the reaction, on the morrow, may be either an increased exaltation of spirit, or a horrible depression.

I do not know whether we are wholly responsible for these reactions. But we have to face them and to recognize them for what they are—and not allow either to dominate us wholly. To maintain sanity we must be masters of our moods.

Elijah's depression after the experience on Carmel is a case in point. Elijah appears almost the exact counterpart of Atlas—until God reminds him that he is not the only man on whom the cause of truth depends: "I have left me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Then his "protracted nightmare" passes away as he girds himself once more for further service.

Perhaps, however, it is not the success of our service—so inadequate as that appears to us (as it did to Elijah)—which brings about "that Mondayish feeling."

It may be that yesterday we had "a bad time." We are obsessed by the sense of utter failure, and wonder what earthly good we can hope to accomplish by "the foolishness of preaching." Happily the *feeling* of "utter

failure" does not correspond to the reality—and in our hearts we know that it doesn't.

I was interested to read the other day a paragraph by Dr. F. B. Meyer concerning a sentence in one of his Northfield Addresses which brought comfort and new hope to one whose name is known to you all. "There was nothing" he admits "of striking novelty or originality in it, but it happened to arrest his attention at a moment of special anxiety and crisis."

Dr. Wilbur Chapman, of whom the incident is related, was at that time Pastor of the Wanamaker Church in Philadelphia. "He was extremely depressed one Monday morning, at the results of his ministry generally, and more particularly with his ministry on the previous day. So downhearted was he that he determined to send in his resignation of the pastorate; and the ink was still wet when the servant entered with a copy of the New York Tribune containing a report of the Northfield meetings on the previous Friday. The one sentence which arrested his notice was, 'It is not what a man does for God that really counts, but what God does by and through him.' Those words," as Dr. Meyer says, "changed his entire attitude to his work. He knelt at the feet of Christ, confessed his mistake, and yielded himself, spirit, and soul and body, to become thenceforward the channel through which His fulness might flow out to bless the world. He arose with new heart and hope, tore up his letter of resignation, entered on his world-wide ministry, and often repeated the story in his subsequent meetings with Christian ministers and Church workers."

Dora Greenwell indicates another remedy in an Essay which she entitles "Hardened in good." She is not writing directly on the feeling which we ministers describe as "Mondayish"—but the feeling which follows disillusionment, when the amateur philanthropist really comes to grips with vice and want and squalor with their shiftiness and shiftlessness, trick, deception, improvidence and reckless folly.

This is the paragraph:—"A steadfast Christian worker may go on for a while pretty smoothly, then the current of his work will seem to bring him, as it were naturally, into the thick of some net-work of misery and

evil so intricate and widespreading that he is inclined, with the prophet of old, to sit down 'astounded.' He feels powerless, helpless, hopeless. A chill recoil from his work, made up of disgust and weariness steals across him; and for such recoils there is but one remedy—to *come yet nearer*. Then we get beyond the tinsel sentiment, and with it beyond the repulsion to natural feeling; then we come to life's real romance, in learning what true love is, and what true pity."

That, we may describe as a course of *realism*.

We shall not, of course, forget the Master's own remedy—*rest*.

"Come ye apart . . . and rest awhile."

Men find their rest in different directions.

Some, like Elia in his later days, may "choose to linger a-bed and digest their dreams"—and if you want to know how to profit by a holiday in bed read Sir J. M. Barrie's Essay on the subject.

Others may prefer a more strenuous course—and Monday will find them in the open air "foozling" a ball on Hanger Hill or in Richmond Park, and imagining they are playing golf. Well it doesn't matter much so long as the end is achieved, and the jaded mind and heart are rested and refreshed.

Dr. Culross, I believe, used to boast that he never felt Mondayish—but that was because he took Saturday "off" instead.

We preach to others about "the right use of Sunday."

You and I have to determine for ourselves "the right use of Monday"—and it will not be the same for us all. But if we use it right the end will be the same, for it will fit us to continue the task which God has given us to do.

T. W. Pym in his second book on "Psychology and the Christian Life"—refers to the fact that God sees us as 100% men—and we persist in allowing the picture of a mere 25% man or less to control our life. And he suggests that Christians have much to learn from Christian Science along the lines of auto-suggestion.

Probably it is the 25% picture that presents itself on Monday morning. We over-estimate the power of evil in

ourselves and around us, and exaggerate its value. "My 25% picture" he says "is false, not because the evil in my life is non-existent, but because my estimate of its strength and my undervaluation of God's power in me is a wholly false picture of the proportion of evil and good within me."

The best use of Monday therefore is that which enables us the better to see the 100% picture which is in the mind of God—and by enabling us to *see* it, gives us power to become what God intended us to be, "100% men."

G. E. PRIDEAUX (Gunnensbury).



#### THE MESSAGE FOR A DISILLUSIONED AGE.

*Address delivered to the Ministers' Meeting of the L.B.A.  
September 29, 1925.*

**T**HERE are two things we must try to know thoroughly if we are to do our work as Ministers well. We must know the Message that is entrusted to us, and we must also know the age in which we are living. Our task is to get that message accepted, and to make it bear fruit in the lives of men and women to-day. If we do not know what it is essentially that we have to say, we are not likely to do much good. On the other hand, if we do not know what the men and women around us are thinking, we can find no point of contact between the truth we want to teach and the minds in which it is to work. How to suit the message to the age :—that is our task.

Now I know how risky it is to generalise and to apply a single epithet to a whole period, but I do not think we shall be far out if we say that one great characteristic of this age in which we are living is a sense of disillusionment. We have been cheated out of many things for which we confidently hoped. We have seen one thing after another fail to fulfil its promise, until many men and women are saying in despair and hopelessness, "Who

will shew us any good?" What answer have we to make to this mood? What is the Message for a Disillusioned Age?

I think there can be little doubt that this *is* a disillusioned age. The words of the Psalmist which I have just quoted fit to-day like a glove. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good." If we do not hear it, we must be hopelessly out of touch with the minds of many, not only in the world, but in our Churches too.

Take the story of the last ten years. What was the mood of this country ten years ago to-day. We had just got through the first year of war, and Idealism was rampant, one might almost say, blatant. The war was to be "a war to end war"; men were still voluntarily enlisting in such numbers that the authorities did not know what to do with them. They were going out in the spirit of crusaders and they believed that they were assisting in an almost holy enterprise. Their closer acquaintance with Army life rather weakened that feeling, and soon their mood changed to one of grim holding on in a course they came increasingly to hate. At home too, there was a waning of early enthusiasm for war. Fervid orators might tell us that the war had purged out all the evil from our land, but we took leave to doubt it. We did not see the evidence. We did not abate one jot of admiration for our soldiers, but we found there were others concerned in the making of a war besides the men who fought and suffered and died, and they were not so admirable. We may say that by 1918 this country was utterly sick and weary of the word war. Then came the Armistice, and what hopes we had then. Can you not recall the uplifted mood of the country at that time? We were to have a real peace of reconciliation. The League of Nations was to inaugurate a new world era. This land was to be made fit for heroes to live in, and we were going to start at once to build the new world. That blessed word, "Reconstruction" was in everybody's mouth. We told ourselves that when the men came back from the war, they would bring new life into our churches and quicken all our organisation. We tried to make ourselves believe that we were on the eve of a great religious revival. We drew fancy pictures of the world after the war—most of us here have an address on

that subject, I suspect, unless we have destroyed it. All seemed for the best in the best of all possible worlds just then. "Dance your feet off until October," said the Bishop of London, in one of the most incredibly silly speeches a public man has ever made, "and then help us to build the new world" Well! October came and passed and October has come again and again, and men are saying, "Where is the new world" What has it all come to? I refrain from making the obvious comment on England being a land fit for heroes to live in, but the phrase "Peace with a vengeance" is a very good indication of the change of mood that has come over Europe. Is it any wonder that "there be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" We may excuse them, or we may criticise them for saying it as we think fit, but we must at any rate face the fact that they are saying it. This is our only hope of finding an answer to the question.

Further—and here the problem comes nearer home to us in our churches—the story of many a human soul during the last ten years is one of similar disillusionment and perplexity. We must try sympathetically to understand what has been happening in the minds of men and women during that time. Many who had lived a sheltered and uneventful life were forced out into the open and slipped away from all their accustomed moorings. They encountered temptations which otherwise would have been almost impossible. They were brought up against doubts concerning matters that till then they had never questioned. They had been brought up all their lives in a certain atmosphere of Sunday Schools and meetings, and these things had constituted religion for them. There were many things they had always understood they must not do and certain rather conventional ideas they had always taken for granted. But the new life took nearly all these things away from them. All the props were kicked away from under them. They had to associate with a kind of person they had never had anything to do with before, and they found that what they had always looked upon as their religion was not much use to them. They were thrown on their own inward resources, and the tragedy was that many found then that they had none. A friend of mine told me that during the war years, he had only been able

to attend about six services in four years. He was in a lonely outpost in Africa. Now try and realise the case. What would our religious life be like if we were cut off from our chapels and our services on Monday and Wednesday, or whatever day it is for four years, and in addition were constantly confronted with the problems and temptations that the war produced. The man I have mentioned stood his ground, but is it any wonder that many have come through the experience with their faith riddled through and through; conscious of the utter overthrow of much that seemed stable before and wondering in utter perplexity what is saved from the wreck. In some cases they are back in our churches, but we make a fatal mistake if we imagine they are just reposing in the easy, unquestioned acquiescence that marked their pre-war days. They too are saying, far more than we imagine, "Who will shew us any good?"

"During the past year," wrote a young fellow to me recently, "religion has really played a very small part in my life, and I am conscious of no difference, except that my outlook on life has become broader."

I believe he only said frankly what many are thinking without avowing it and it is no use just being shocked with such a sentiment. We have to realise that men and women are feeling the hollowness and the real inefficacy of much that passed with them for religion. In the religious sphere as in the social and political, there is a great deal of disillusionment abroad.

Now this is a very dangerous mood both for the world and the individual. For one thing, if we cannot prescribe for it and check it, it will issue very soon in cynicism. The disillusioned idealist always tends to become the bitterest cynic. From saying, "Who will shew us any good?" he goes a step further and says, "There is no good. It is all a vast conspiracy to dupe the credulous." Even now, it is resulting, in many cases, in a paralysis of effort. How can we work it we are not quite sure there is anything worth working for? We ask men and women to teach in our Sunday Schools, and they shew hesitation in accepting or they frankly refuse. They may put us off with other reasons, but I believe that very often at the back of their minds they are thinking—what have I got to

teach? I cannot just pass on the facile things that failed me in my hour of need, but what have I in their place. There is a paralysing sense of bewilderment abroad. Anyone who has much to do with thoughtful men and women to-day knows that. It all seemed such plain sailing once: it is such heavy going now. Yes! it is a disillusioned age that we are called upon to help.

Perhaps it would help us to find a cure for this complaint if we could discover the reasons for it. Why are so many people disillusioned and dispirited to-day?

For one thing, I believe we are suffering from disillusionment for the very natural reason that many of our hopes of what was to come to us from the war were altogether unfounded. We cherished expectations which we had no right nor reason to entertain. We made ourselves believe that war could do for us what war cannot do; that out of this evil thing good would come. The hope that war would bring about a revival of religion or cleanse our national life was doomed to disappointment from the start. A good many people doped their reasons and their intelligence during the war. They lived in a fool's paradise, and they are only just beginning to face facts as they exist in a real world. It is the waking up that is so painful. People lived on fine phrases, not knowing how empty of meaning they were, and now that they have been shewn to be empty, there is a natural, but perhaps too violent recoil. If this bitter experience teaches us that we have nothing to hope for from war, it will not be without its uses for the world, but at present there is a great deal of irritation abroad, and a sense that we have been swindled.

Again, much of our belief was unexamined and untested. We had a compact and convenient set of ideas that we really thought we believed implicitly, but they had never been seriously challenged. We had not been made to ask ourselves, under the stress of some great trial, what were the things we did really believe and must hold on to desperately at all costs. Really we believed much less than we thought we did. We put all these things on the same level and allowed them all to go untested and unexamined. The verbal inspiration of the Bible, the traditional customs of Sunday observance, the conventional

prohibitions of religion, were all jumbled up with belief in a living God and a working faith in Jesus Christ. They were not sorted out and given their comparative values, and so when one went, the whole lot went with it. It is a pitiful fact, but it cannot be denied, that a number of men who had been attending our churches seemed to imagine that if the world was not made in six days, or Jonah was not swallowed by a whale, the bottom was knocked out of religion. If we have been in any way responsible for this extraordinary lack of proportion in men's way of thinking of religion we have much to answer for to the young men of this generation.

Once more, we put too much trust in organisation and machinery and imagined we had only to form a committee, or start a league, or join a political party, to get all our problems solved. Royal Commissions, League of Nations, sub-committees to go into the matter and report, these were the things that were going automatically to build the new world, and the plain fact is that they have not done so, and never will do so. It is because we thought they would that we have to encounter so much disillusionment to-day.

Unfounded hopes, unexamined faith, unwarranted expectations—there are some reasons for the mood of the age. Are we making much progress in unlearning some of them which have let us down so badly? A very significant phrase was used recently in the discussion of labour unrest. "Let us have it" it was said, "a strike to end strikes." That calls up some memories. Would you not have thought that the "war to end war" would have given us enough of that sentiment for our lifetime? There is not much difference between a war and a strike anyway, and strikes will not end strikes, any more than wars will end war. If we are going to repeat that discredited nonsense, we are in for the same old round of hysterical anticipations, followed by sullen and resentful disillusionment. It is another case of our old friend "the vicious circle."

Again, events like the egregious Tennessee trial must have given a nasty jar to those who believed that we were in the mood to overhaul our religious beliefs, with a view to seeing which of them were really operative for our lives.

One does wonder sometimes whether we have learned enough from our bitter experiences.

And so we come to the cure for this mood of disillusionment. How are we going to set about our task of restoring faith and setting it on a basis that is unassailable? What kind of message is most likely to help this disillusioned generation?

Plato once said that "The unexamined life is unlivable for a human being." It is in the long run, but men will go on as long as they can without examining life. That means an effort of thought, and large numbers of people will do anything in reason, but they will not think. That explains a great deal of the trouble in politics and religion. Men take up catch-words and do not examine them, They muddle along, living the "unexamined life."

But now, suppose we are going to start on this examination, who is to be the examiner? When the Psalmist was confronted with a whole lot of people asking, "Who will shew us any good?" he turned from them to God with the prayer, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." That is the place from which to start. Bring God in, not as an abstraction but as a living Person in whose countenance we stand. Suppose we began by thinking of our lives as always under that searching scrutiny; suppose God's countenance shone on every part of our life, individual and social. Would not that make a difference? It would mean the salvation of it. "Cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved." I do not see any other hope of salvation or restoration than this. It is necessary for us to say to this generation, "Unless you begin with God, you will not go far, with all your noisy cries and your elaborate schemes. Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

So then, I want, in this closing section, to set down three propositions which I believe will help us to escape from disillusionment ourselves, and also to deliver others from the same complaint.

The first is this. Do not start from creeds and organisations, but from a living God in whose countenance we stand. Has it ever occurred to you that most of the things we are thinking and talking about to-day end in

-ism, or if not that, then -ation? People talk as though the religious people had a monopoly of the -isms, but it is by no means the case. It is a bad habit that everybody is getting into. We have Bolshevism, Socialism, Syndicalism, Spiritualism, as well as Fundamentalism and Modernism, with a few -ations thrown in for a change. It gets us into very loose ways of thinking.

In that very amusing book called "Old Gorgon Graham," a book crammed full of shrewd wisdom, these words occur as the exhortation from the old man to his son. "Shy off from words ending in -ism, my boy. From scepticism to rheumatism, there's an ache and a pain in every blamed joint of 'em." That is a good advice, and we might take it with advantage. It is not any of our -isms that make up our religious life, though they make nearly all our religious difficulties and controversies. We shall probably have to come to them in the end, but we need not start from them. Let us start from the idea of a living, personal God who is over all life and in all life. Dr. Reaveley Glover has told us in "The Jesus of History" that we have to learn to "rethink God in the light of Jesus Christ." That is the beginning of all religion: to have right thoughts about God, and the only way we can get these for ourselves is to go right back behind all the creeds and symbols of the Church to Christ Himself. Is our God the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," or a bundle of abstractions, vagueness raised to infinity? There was once a little girl who was very much troubled by the idea of God having written the cursing Psalms. She solved the problem eventually by saying, "Well! I suppose He wrote them before He became a Christian." The trouble with men is that their God has not become a Christian, and the only way that we can reach a faith that is unassailable and beyond the reach of disillusionment is to begin with a God who is like Jesus Christ. That is the first proposition.

The second is—Develop a sense of personal responsibility to this God. If God is what Jesus said He was, then we are in the most intimate of relationships to Him. Think of Him as the Absolute, as Omnipotence or Omniscience, and you do not feel that He has much concern with our personal lives and the details of our

everyday work; but think of Him habitually as Father, and it becomes at once a matter of supreme concern how we stand towards Him. Further, no body of men can alter that personal relation, or absolve us from our personal responsibility to Him. I do not think the sense of personal responsibility is very strongly developed to-day. It is the day of mass movements and they tend to lessen inevitably the value of the individual. Men trust more and more to the mass, and the individual is lost, or counts less and less. That is bad for faith. In this realm, a man cannot surrender his share of responsibility to anybody. No Church, and no Denomination can express by proxy the faith of its members. I am responsible to God to do His will and to learn His truth, let others do what they will and the only faith that is going to last all through, is one that is worked into the very warp and woof of our own lives. Give men a faith of that kind, and they are beyond the reach of disillusion.

Lastly—Define the good in terms of God. Those who are crying out “Who will shew us any good?” are very largely going on the assumption that “the good” is something for us to get. That is not altogether a Christian assumption. According to Christ, the good is not something to get so much as something to do. The world is full of people crying out for their rights. It is all very well, and many of the claims are fully justified, but the very fact that these cries still rise seems to shew that we have not only to clamour for our rights, but to ask to be shewn our duties also, and I am perfectly sure that many people would get out of their mood of disillusion and disgruntlement, if they would stop thinking about themselves and the good that others ought to do for them, and begin to ask what God requires of them, and what service they can render to others. We have had more than enough of asking, “Why does not the Government do something?” or “What are the Churches doing about it?” We want men and women to start saying instead, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

Dr. John Hutton recently wrote these words, which seem to me to be very wise ones.

“The only proof that we mean what we say is that we act accordingly. This certainly is the contribution which

we Christian people are called upon to make towards the quietening and steadying of society in our day—we are perhaps not so much to speak, as to act in obedience to what seems to us most urgent. It may very well be that for some considerable time we ought to deny ourselves even what we might call the luxuries of faith, restraining our religious fancies and not pandering at all to our curiosity, concerning things future and unseen. We may well leave all that to God; and surely the less we know about unseen things just now, the more delightful will it be when the whole blessed thing dawns upon us! It may be that for a long time ahead we ought to concentrate upon our *duty*, not so much asking this and that from life which is the hand of God, but rather asking ourselves how *we* who have what we have, and this so much more than we deserve, may now stop thinking too anxiously about ourselves and may give ourselves generously to meet the necessity and crisis of our time."

These then are some of the things which I conceive we have to say to the men and women of our generation. Things have been shaken to their foundations and the things that cannot be shaken are the only things that remain. These are not the times for us to be messing about with a lot of trivialities, and fighting in the last ditch for things that do not matter. Now that the foundations of life are laid bare, we must let men see them and begin to build on them a better structure than the one that has been destroyed.

"The world is weary of new tracks of thought

That lead to nought.

Sick of quack remedies prescribed in vain,

For mortal pain.

And still above them all One figure stands

With outstretched hands.

A weary, baffled, disappointed, disillusioned world cries out, "Who will shew us any good?" There is only one answer, and we have it. We must point them to Him who said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

REV. A. J. NIXON, B.A., B.D.

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Clapham.

## SECRETARY'S NOTES.

**A**RRANGEMENTS are being made for the Annual Meeting at Leeds on Thursday, 6th May, 1926.

There will be a United Meeting of the B.M.F.U. and British and American F.U., after the usual Business Meeting. Addresses will be given by Rev. F. Goldsmith French, of Lee (B.M.F.U. President), and Rev. Dr. Cameron from Canada. A joint reception and tea will also be held.

We hope that all Boxes will be returned in good time to the Librarian (Rev. W. H. Pratt, of Norwood), so that there may be no delay in sending them out again in the New Year.

There are many outstanding Subscriptions for 1925 and we shall be grateful if all those who receive the little reminder of this fact will forward them immediately to the Secretary.

*All* Subscriptions for 1926 are due at the beginning of the year.

We have been able to send out four numbers of the "Fraternal" this year and the Council are very grateful to those who have sent in suitable articles.

It will only be possible to send out the "Fraternal" regularly every three months if the members subscriptions are regularly paid up.

The Council desire to wish all the Members of our Brotherhood a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

A. J. PAYNE.