

Anglican Teaching and the Twentieth Century.

II.

TO turn now to the Christology of the Church and of the twentieth century. When we come to the subject of Christology, we find that it is very fashionable now in many theological circles to openly deny those constitutive beliefs which were universally accepted as the explicit affirmations of the Creeds, and that the Church has been not a little shocked of late by what seems to be the surrender of the citadel of faiths of the Church on the part of some of her foremost teachers.

Years ago it was the habit of all earnest students of theological tendency to familiarize themselves with the works of the leading antagonists of Christianity, and the arguments of the infidels from Julian, Celsus, and Porphyry, and Bolingbroke, Hume, and Voltaire, to the casuistries of a more modern age in such works as Renan's "Vie de Jésus," Greg's "Creed of Christendom," and the more brilliant effort of "Supernatural Religion." These men were all of them actuated by intensity of conviction and ingenuity of suggestion, and, like the ablest of the German and Dutch critical theologians, especially such as Spinoza and De Wette and Vatke and Wellhausen, exhausted their philosophy and scholarship in undermining the foundations of Christianity, especially with regard to the authority and credibility of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, and the actuality of His Virgin Birth, His miracles and Resurrection. But they were all of them infidels. They gloried in their freethinking. They stood unabashed outside, and like daring foes brought up their batteries. They made no pretence to belief. When they tore to pieces the texts they hated, and protruded ingenious theories about the growth of myths and legends and clever explainings away of prophecies and miracles, the possibility of which they denied, they did it as the open foes of Christ and the Bible. But what has shocked the Christian world of late more than anything else has been the fact that the work of

undermining and denying the fundamentals of the faith of Christendom is now carried on, not by avowed foes, but by avowed friends. Suppose we take two examples: the one a leading German, the other a leading English Churchman. Perhaps the latest word in Continental Christology is Professor Loofs's "What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?"—the Haskell Lectures of 1911 (Scribner's, 1913). From the German viewpoint it is really a most moderate and acceptable presentation of the question, and he evidently claims no little credit for separating himself from the extreme rationalists who have carried on what is termed the "liberal Jesus-research," such as Paulus, Strauss, Baur, Keim, Renan, Volkmar, Schweitzer, and Wellhausen. Sanday pats him on the back as one of the best and most cautious of the Germans. He professes to approach the Gospel story in the spirit of scientific investigation, and lays down in his theorem nothing shall be "considered to be true by faith that historical science through the means at its disposal is forced to recognize as unhistorical." He then goes on to say that the three sentences in the so-called Apostolic Creed—"Born of the Virgin Mary," "The third day He rose again from the dead," "He ascended into heaven"—are examples of Biblical tradition that is material, unhistorical; and continues: "It is therefore, in my opinion, the duty of all honest friends of the truth among the leading Christians to accustom their congregations to the thought that not the whole of the Biblical tradition about Jesus is undoubtedly historical"! In the name of historical science he evaporates the so-called orthodox view of the Trinity, and the two natures in the One Person of Christ, and declares that "all learned Protestant theologians of Germany admit unanimously that the orthodox doctrine of the two natures in Christ cannot be retained in its traditional form"; and says: "All our systematic theologians . . . are seeking new paths in their Christology." I thought as I read this of the words of the inspired one: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall

find rest for your soul. But they said, We will not walk therein."

But to turn from Loofs and his characteristically Teutonic medley of the baldest rationalism and seeming Christian faith, to what more nearly concerns us as Anglicans, let us take the case of certain Oxford scholars who, in the work entitled "Foundations," have endeavoured to restate Christian belief in the terms of modern thought, and more especially of Professor Sanday and his famous letter to the Bishop of Oxford. The same curious phenomenon of mind greets us. Statements apparently orthodox, affirmations of the necessity of safeguarding the central truths, repudiations of any desire or attempt to undermine in any way the essentials of the faith, are combined with the freest admission of the imaginative or imaginary nature of some of our Lord's miracles (that is, that they are not historically true), and the repudiation in the frankest terms of the Virgin Birth ("I believe most emphatically His supernatural birth; but I cannot scarcely bring myself to believe that His birth was *unnatural*. . . ."); the Resurrection ("The question at issue relates to a detail, the actual resuscitation of the body of our Lord from the tomb. The accounts that have come down to us seem to be too conflicting and confused to prove this"—Sanday, p. 20); and the Ascension ("I do not think that the evidence is sufficient to convince us that the physical elevation of the Lord's Body really happened as an external objective fact"—Sanday, p. 15); and Streeter adds: "I know of no living theologian who would maintain a physical Ascension"—*i.e.*, in the sense of a physical body rising into heaven ("Foundations," p. 132).

In brief, Professor Sanday and some of the leading exponents of the modern Anglicanism, Fellows and Deans of colleges, frankly declare that they and a great body with them do not accept the Creed of the Church and the teaching of the Church of England as set forth in the Second and Third Articles—the Son, the Word of the Father, the Very and Eternal God, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and

Christ did *truly* rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven! In a word, what was once the abhorrent monopoly of the atheists and the rationalists seems now to have become the profession of unbelief on the part of outstanding Churchmen.

It is somewhat difficult to analyze the reason of this departure from the old paths, but it may be said that the causes are possibly these: First of all, and back of it all, deep down beneath it all, is unquestionably the letting go of the Divineness of the Scriptures, and the habit of regarding them as more or less human records. The attitude of the modern theologian to the Bible is practically identical with that of the former-day rationalists. It is handled precisely as any other book. There doesn't seem to be the faintest trace of their accepting as a categorical postulate "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The *a priori* method of the believer who brings with him into the investigation of the Bible the belief that the Bible is the Word of God, and the Scriptures the Holy Scriptures, has passed, and there has come instead the *a priori* method of the modernist, who comes to his investigation of the Bible and theology with the philosophic prejudices against the miraculous and the liberal hatred of all that is orthodox and traditional.

Another thing is the extraordinary supremacy of German thought, and the incredible deference to German critical scholarship on the part of English-speaking theologians of all names and degrees. Dr. Sanday is not the only one who has dared to leap into the limelight as their champion. "It is surely a fact of some significance that the Protestant scholars of the foremost nation of the world for penetrating thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and technical knowledge, should have arrived with a considerable degree of unanimity just at this kind of conclusion." "Germany has been at work on these problems for more than a century, like a hive of bees." But anyone who had read even such a work as Loofs's "What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?" must come to the conclusion that much of the talk

about newest evidence and latest scientific research, and the historical investigation of the recent facts regarding the texts of the Gospels and the teachings and miracles of Jesus, is simply German credulity. They take all the theories of the infidels from the days of Porphyry to Celsus and Strauss to Baur, dress it up in a little philosophic verbiage, and call it scientific evidence and modern research; and our critical Anglican scholars—about whom, according to Sanday, “nothing is wanton, nothing supercilious, nothing cynical,” but with whom, apparently, a whisper from Loofs or Harnack is louder than a shout from St. Paul or St. John—fall into line, and, professing with the utmost conviction their regard for the central realities of the faith, parade in a very philosophic and approved style all sorts of anti-supernaturalistic conclusions.

But perhaps the strongest cause is the mistaken idea that the upholders of the faith are bound, as they never were before, to recognize the *Zeitgeist* of the twentieth century, and do everything that is possible to conciliate the man on the street—especially the man on College Street. They start with two amazing theorems. The first is that religion must make terms with philosophy (“Foundations,” p. 426). The second, that the more the supernatural is explained away or repudiated, the more the modern mind will become sincerely and humbly Christian. They assume that the only religion that the world of to-day will accept is one in harmony with science, philosophy, and scholarship. But the science, philosophy, and scholarship, of to-day, if not confessedly monistic, according to Professor James—who states that the old-fashioned Bible Christianity has tended to disappear in the British and American Universities—is certainly rationalistic, and all who know anything about the supremacy of Germany in these domains know full well that their science, philosophy, and scholarship, is avowedly anti-Christian. Therefore, they seem to argue, it is necessary for the Christian and for the Church to re-examine its foundations, and reach, if possible, that minimum of Divine truth which the semi-sceptic, the partially-agnostic, and the more or less

rationalistic layman and cleric will agree to, in order that everything may be removed that is distasteful to the masses. They seem to say: We have a Bible inspired, a Christ Divine, a Creed Apostolic—but what do you object to? How much of it can you not agree with? What portion of it causes offence? Which are the parts you would like us to cut out? We know you are of the age: you must therefore be philosophic. We know you are sensitively conscious of being modern: you must therefore be scientific. So here we stand, with ACCOMMODATION written all over us. We will explain away anything, *re-state* anything, abandon anything, in order to accommodate you.

But what is there, either in the Bible or in the history of Christian experience, to warrant the assumption either that religion must make terms with philosophy, or that the making of such terms will conciliate the philosophic? According to the New Testament, the very opposite is the case. The cleverness of the specially clever, and the scholarliness of the specially scholarly, did not qualify them, according to St. Paul, for reception of the truth, for the psychical man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. i. 18-31, ii. 4-14); and as to science and philosophy, he utters his earnest appeal that no one victimize us by the imposition of philosophy (Col. ii. 8), and that we guard the entrusted deposit of the Faith, resolutely avoiding the fallacies, scoffings, and disputations, of the pseudonymous gnosis (an inspired description of much that is taught in the German and American Universities!). As a matter of fact, a narrow little semi-infidel world of German leadership has been arrogating to itself for half a century the name of scholarship, and a somewhat servile world of American and British modernism has been trying to make itself worthy of that fellowship by accepting all its postulates and admitting all its conclusions.

When we turn from the Christology of modernism to that of the Church, we are struck with the contrast. The Christological atmosphere of the twentieth century is frankly Arian or semi-

Arian. It must be. It is, of course, quite possible for a philosophic mind to completely restate both the humanity and Deity of Christ, and yet acknowledge in some sense that He is both God and man. Yet how to assimilate the Anglican view of the Deity of Christ with the Loofs-Sanday denial of the Virgin Birth, the bodily Resurrection and Ascension, is a conundrum that only a Teutonic theologian can solve. It is the Schleiermacher-Ritschlian attempt to excogitate a Christology out of the philosophic consciousness concerning the "Urbild" or Ideal Man.

But the Christology of the Church is given forth with no uncertain sound both in the Prayer-Book and Articles. In the Second Article the Virgin Birth of the Everlastingly-begotten Son is stated to the effect that two whole and perfect natures—that is, the Godhead and Manhood—were joined together in one Person; and throughout the whole of the Liturgy, in the *Gloria Patri, Te Deum*, the Litany, the Creeds, the Collects, the Communion Service, the Deity of the Son of God is stated, not in language that can be plainly understood, but in language that cannot possibly be misunderstood. To those who have not read it, or who have possibly forgotten what they once read, the article by Liddon, in his Bampton Lectures, on "The Divinity of our Lord, or the Worship of Jesus Christ in the Services of the Church of England," is one of the most convincing pieces of argumentation it is possible to imagine. In an answer to the leading neologian of his day, Bishop Colenso, he shows that the Church of England, from beginning to end of the Prayer-Book, invokes Jesus Christ as Lord, and worships and glorifies Him as God, in not less than 283 different places, invoking Him as Lord, and Son of God, and Lamb of God, and Saviour of the World, no less than 83 times, and giving Him Divine honour equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost no less than 200 times. In addition to this there are the Doxologies of the Ordination and the Benedictions in various services, in the Name of the Ever-blessed Trinity. And what makes it most remarkable of all is that at the time of the

Reformation all appeals and addresses to any created being were rigorously excluded, an excision which has thrown into sharper relief the anti-Arian attitude of the Church.

A few words in conclusion. It seems to me that our foremost need as modern clergy is to go back to our Ordination vows and back to the Bible. One fears that we read *non multum sed multa*, and that in the pursuit of problems and questions we are side-tracked from the main object of our lives. We are too much ashamed of a child-like acceptance of the Word of God and the continuous preaching of the Living Christ and the Living Word. We are liable to preach a Christ after the flesh, who is a Leader, a Teacher, an Exemplar, rather than the Christ Divine who is the Saviour of the soul, and emphasize the salvation of the body rather than the salvation of the soul. The fallacies of Christian Science are working like leaven, and permeating the age-consciousness. Christian Science is supremely a religion for the body, and men forget that they can reach the bodies of people through their souls a thousand times better than they can reach their souls through their bodies. And it is the Divine plan, if St. Paul and St. Peter are to be trusted.

In the second place, it seems to me our duty is to get rid of the terror that the German-scholarship bogie has too long inspired. If a few leaders have retreated or gone over to the enemy, that is no reason why the rank and file should give way. There is a fine passage in Pascal's Provincial Letters which tells how he once stood alone and battled with terrific earnestness for the truth against the whole of the Port-Royalists. After an exhaustive argumentation, Pascal sank into unconsciousness through sheer physical exhaustion. These are his words: "When I saw those whom I regarded as the persons to whom God has made known His truth, and who ought to be its champions, all giving way, I was so overcome with grief that I could stand it no longer."

The supremacy of German thought in criticism and theology for the past fifty years has been simply appalling. Germany

has long imposed upon the world of theology and scholarship. She has strutted as a dictator. Her claim has been admitted. Her leadership has been accepted. Every bold advance of so-called "scientific research" on the part of the Germans, from Reimarus to Schweitzer, and from Schleiermacher to Harnack, has been marked by a retreat on the part of leading British-American theologians and scholars, and a surrender of the very citadels of criticism and theology. To-day pro-German literature is barred in Canada—not because it is clever, not because it is philosophic, but because it is disloyal. It is misleading. It poisons and unsettles the loyalist mind. It shakes confidence and evokes suspicion. It undermines and weakens the foundations of national life. And to-day believers ought to bar their minds to the reception of the Germanic theories—not because they are not willing to receive truths from every possible quarter, and to welcome every evidence that scientific criticism and theology can adduce, but because these Germanic methods and conclusions are false, and therefore, as disloyal to Christ and the Bible, they are worthy of all repudiation. For my own part, I would much rather give Nietzsche to a young minister or a theological student than I would Loofs. For Nietzsche, with his fiery loathing of Christ and Christianity, is blankly and frankly atheistic; but Loofs veils in academic and apparently liberal language the dangerous sophism of the semi-Divine Christ of German Modernism.

Our hope is that one result of this calamitous war will be the absolute collapse of the German supremacy in criticism, and a saner attitude on the part of British-American theologians towards German leadership. Our prayer is that as this war has given the overwhelming demonstration of the collapse of culture and philosophy as a force to regenerate a nation, so it will drive the Christians of this twentieth century, with its pretended goodness and pride of science, art, and civilization, back to the simple Word of the Living God. If to be philosophic is to be as rationalistic as the Germans, then we must dare to be unphilosophic. It was the Master Himself who said: "I thank

Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding" (from the clever and cultured, whose pride and prejudice are the great spiritual disqualifications), "and didst reveal them unto babes." Surely our duty is to stand fast and be strong. A great door and effectual is open before our beloved Church, and there are many adversaries. But if we are only true to the Bible and the Church and the Christ of God, a vista of unimaginable power and progress will be revealed to the Church through her faith in the Revealed, the Redeeming, the Risen, the Reigning, the Returning Son of God.

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