

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute
OR
Philosophical Society of Great Britain

VOL. LXXIX.

1947



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY

THE INSTITUTE, 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

871ST ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON
MONDAY 14TH APRIL, 1947.

THE REV. C. T. COOK IN THE CHAIR.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY.

THE REVEREND PRINCIPAL P. W. EVANS, D.D.

WHILST our main concern is with authority, as possessed and exercised by Christ, rather than with general problems, it is not unnecessary to recall that religion is, by its very nature, authoritarian, and, in so far as it loses that characteristic, it deviates from its true idea. However variously we define religion, we must include in it the notion of relationship to a higher power or powers, by whose superiority we are controlled. When Julian Huxley (in *Religion without Revelation*) defines religion as "a way of life," and explains that "religion arose as a feeling of the sacred," he reduces religion to an activity instrumental to our purposes and arising out of our nature. It is not surprising that he acknowledges that it will be extremely difficult to induce humanity to abandon thinking "in terms of an external, personal, supernatural, spiritual being," and instead to "see God as a creation of the human soul (albeit a necessary and fruitful one)." The desired change will, he thinks, only mean that "the living reality will have to change its clothes—that is all." But the new garments clothe a form that is certainly not religion, and which has never lived. The novelist sees more clearly than the scientist when J. B. Priestley makes one of his characters say: "You can't invent a god; he must arrive like a thunderbolt" (*Faraway*, p. 432). The speaker adds, "I don't think he will arrive"; the Christian knows One Who has arrived, and Whose name is Immanuel, God with us.

II

The reaction against the idea of religious authority is understandable. The word is prejudiced by excesses of authority in many realms. Papalism led to the word being covered with justified odium. The totalitarian systems of government gave us modern Cæsarism. Novelists and playwrights, by a one-sided presentation of Victorian home life, fostered the idea that the nineteenth-century child lived in harsh and arbitrary subjection, with the result that to-day innumerable homes are destroyed and a worse serfdom inflicted upon youth by reason of the decay of parental authority. Into a world thus inclined to revolt against control there has come scientific dogmatism, and the rebels who rejected other forms of authority are found eagerly embracing the new imperialism.

To this reaction, however, there is a better side, in the recognition of the fact that, since without freedom personality is not expressed, an authority that annihilates freedom must be withstood. The Viennese psychology laid its emphasis on self-expression, leaving us with the problem of alternating rival selves; which has the right to be expressed. The expression of the self should involve the development of the self, and that self is inevitably social, and must have regard for others in its expression. The rise of dictatorships was perhaps not wholly unrelated to the prevalence of such unbalanced views. It is, at any rate, significant that these political dictatorships have all flourished on soil previously occupied by Churches of the strongly authoritarian type, who furthered their misconceived authority by seeking alliance with temporal power. There is a warning there against the misuse of an authority claimed in the name of Christ.

In the light of these teachings we echo Wordsworth's complaint:—

“ Me this uncharted freedom tires ;

I feel the weight of chance desires.”

A freedom which knows nothing of authority degenerates into subjection to the arbitrary tyranny of “chance desires.” Freedom and authority must be reconciled, for one thing, because the individual stands in, and over against, a world that can control him and that he can control. Neither individual nor world has unlimited freedom or authority in relation to the other. This world contains other persons and things. In

relation to the world of things, we have no authority to stop the flow of volcanic lava, but we have freedom to get out of the way. We cannot command the seasons, but we can regulate agriculture so as to gain advantage from them. As Francis Bacon put it, we can rule Nature by obeying her. In regard to the world of persons, this interdependence is yet more marked. We were born of other persons, our parents. To them we owe nurture, training, protection in infancy. In maturity we assert our freedom from such control, but the coming of age and infirmity will redress the balance. In religion, obviously, Freedom and Authority must be reconciled. Christianity comes to us at first *via* Authority (tradition and teaching, example and precept), but it is only received by a free act of personal devotion. Godet dedicated his New Testament Introduction to his revered master, Neander, "who opened up my way between slavery to the letter and a proud disdain of authority."

Thomas Carlyle has emphases which need correction today, but his strong sense of life, finding its freedom under rightful sovereignty, is justified. "Liberty?" (he cries): "the true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path, and to walk therein" Oliver Cromwell is "no volunteer in public life, but plainly a balloted soldier strictly ordered" into public life. "Find your king; raise him to the supreme place and loyally reverence him—and you have a perfect government" (*Past and Present*).

III

The Basis of Christ's Authority.

"Find your King!" Not *appoint* your King!

The inherent nature of religious Authority needs to be remembered in view of suggestions which make Christ's authority dependent on qualities in His character that instantly win the allegiance of men. There is truth in this, if we avoid the error of making the authority dependent on our recognition of it. That would mean that it is constituted by our appreciation of its right to command us; that way of thinking is natural to a society which is familiar with elected rulerships, whose authority arises out of the electorate, but valuable as such elements are within society, they are irrelevant to the life of religion. The worshipper does not adore a republican presidency, but Him Who is before all things and in Whom all things consist. Christ's

kingly authority derives from His own Person, not from any acknowledgment of ours.

We prefer not to speak of "The Authority of Jesus" for two reasons; one is that the earthly name, the name of the Incarnation period, insufficiently expresses the transcendent and eternal quality of His rule over His people; the other is that the name "Christ" speaks of a divine anointing, and thus of a divinely-given authority. The supreme authority in religion must be God Himself, but the New Testament reveals Christ as One Whom all men are to honour "even as they honour the Father." The titles therefore that indicate His relationship with God express the basis of His divine authority. His authority, because it is His, can have in it nothing that is unjust, barrenly coercive or tyrannous; instead, it is a gracious and kindly ministry. G. K. Chesterton said. "Catholic doctrine and discipline may be *walls*, but they are *the walls of a playground*" (*Orthodoxy*, p. 267). We prefer a variation of the metaphor that would describe the discipline of Christ as the walls of a *home*. Does His authority irk us sometimes, so that (in the words of Psalm ii, 3), we would "snap their ties and fling off their control"? We should remember then that these ties have their protective and alluring value; we have been "drawn with the cords of a man, with the bands of love" (Hosea xi, 4). Another word from Hosea (x, 2) may be cited with relevance: "They may say . . . But have we not a king? Ah, if men have no reverence for the Eternal, what is the good of a king?" (*Moffatt*).

IV

Forms of Authority.

Authority has various forms in society, and is not always enshrined in exact written form, *e.g.*, the authority of our parliamentary system or of the British Constitution. In these cases the authority is really resident in, or at least exercised by, the men who work them, so that ultimately authority inheres in people, not in abstractions. Roughly we may classify the forms of authority in two ways: (*a*) that derived from the possession of power, and (*b*) that flowing from personal qualities. (*a*) "If we ask any jurist or student of political philosophy, what is the ultimate basis of authority in the State, he will tell us, it is the power of life and death. . . . Unless the chief of

the State could, at the demand of public justice, cut off a man's head, it could not be a guardian of right. Not in vain does the magistrate bear the sword" (A. M. Fairbairn, *Studies in Religion and Philosophy*, p. 414). Actions can be controlled by one who has power to inflict penalty. Such is the relation of king and subjects, of master and slave, of tyrant and victim. Since authority of this type depends upon power, the greatest authority will be the One Who wields supreme power, God, the omnipotent Creator and Ruler, source of all might. To every ruler we may say, in our Lord's words, "Thou couldest have no power over me except it were given thee from above" (John xix, 11). When, therefore, we acknowledge the Deity of our Lord, we in this sense ascribe to Him supreme authority. Such authority may sometimes seem harsh in its exercise; it can compel obedience, but what of the consent of our will and the response of our love?

(b) As the nobler type of authority we turn to that which is based on personality, which achieves its aim, not by the force wielded, but by the love and admiration evoked. Parental authority succeeds, not by its power to punish, but by its will to sacrifice, and to win a love that answers its own. Besides this spiritual authority of the parent, there is the intellectual authority of the teacher, which does not merely impart knowledge but also quickens mental activity. Then there is moral authority, the authority of character, the ideal of manhood. All these are combined in the authority of Christ. The trouble with our world is that the authority of power, and that of personality, are often in conflict, as when Herod could execute John the Baptist, and our Lord Himself holding a reed-sceptre was condemned by Pilate. He then had the authority of personality but, for His redemptive purpose, laid aside the authority of power. We shall one day see Him in possession of both kinds of authority (as in Rev. xix, 11-16, where power is indicated by the many diadems, the following armies, the sword and the rod of iron, while the grace of His sovereign personality is shown by the title "faithful and true.") The hope of our race is in His coming to His kingdom and ruling it as Almighty yet All-loving, All-wise and All-holy.

V

Authority in New Testament and in History.

The New Testament ascribes to Christ Jesus the authority of power, evidenced in His miracles of healing, of control over

nature, over the menace of death. Moreover, He exercises authority as Judge (Matt. xxv, 31 *et seq.*; John v, 22-28). He claims it as Revealer of God, as Teacher with exclusive knowledge, and therefore with incomparable authority (Matt. xi, 22, cf. Luke x, 22). It is implied in His claim to forgive sins, for He confers pardon, not merely announces it. Pardon, to be complete, must be combined with full knowledge and come from the fountain of ultimate justice, and that ultimate justice is the ultimate authority. Authority is also involved in His uncompromising claim to lordship. He requires swift, unquestioning and unreserved obedience (Matt. x, 37; xxviii, 18-20; Luke xiv, 27). The first disciples did not find it strange to read that a woman who had known Him in infancy, in obscurity, in poverty, should say to others: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it!" Besides the wonder of Mary's own words, we ought to consider the marvel of their unhesitating acceptance by the early Church, when living memory could yet check the tradition, and would undoubtedly have disowned it, had it been out of keeping with their recollection of His claims, and their own admission of them.

This authority is continuous, and instead of ending with the Ascension it thereupon becomes more comprehensive and more explicit. The Epistles, it has often been noted, have very little quotation of sayings of Jesus, but they are saturated with His Spirit, and they concede to Him the place of highest authority. The fact that they are not careful about His *ipsissima verba* shows that they realised His authority in no rigid fashion. He rules them, not by a codification of His utterances, but by His vivification of their lives. His is a living authority, to which men, both in the New Testament age and ever since, submit themselves, and in that submission find freedom and self-fulfilment. The results of obedience to it have always been such as vindicate its essential rightness. History has instances of tragedy arising from a misunderstanding of His authority, or rejection of it, but, where action is taken at His command, the issue continually shows that they who follow Him do not walk in darkness. "Authority forgets a dying King," and all other kings pass away; their authority was once a power, then it is but a name, and finally becomes merely a fading memory. Nor is the authority external, for it is that of the indwelling Lord, and it is not alien, for it sways those who are made in the Divine image and have been re-created in Christ.

We notice the important fact that our Lord's authority, during the days of His flesh, was not merely legal and detailed, but consisted of principles rather than of their applications. This was in striking contrast with life under the Jewish law, with its concern about minutiae (cf. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, II, ii, 90-125).

VI

Media of Authority.

How is Christ's authority mediated for us today? By the Bible, the Church, or Christian experience? The Protestant, the Catholic and the Mystic thus variously answer, but in practical experience the three media usually form a threefold cord not quickly broken. When their deliverances conflict, however, we should certainly give chief and regulative place to the Bible, since the others are channels of a derivative authority in a more remote sense than is true of it. Obviously, neither individual spiritual experience, nor the collective experience of the Church (using that term in its most comprehensive sense), can inform us of matters concerning the beginning and consummation of all things; only through a revelation given to elect souls recorded by them and preserved for future generations, could this knowledge be available for all the subsequent ages. Yet our judgments, of events within history, are affected by what is beyond history. We should assign to the Bible the primary place, next we should listen to collective Christian experience, and lastly, in submission to these, we should study the "voice within," the "inner light." The guidance of the two latter has often misled, but there is no evidence that the Bible has been a wrecker's light. It is the purest channel of Christ's authority we possess, and has a permanence unaffected by changes of time, fashions of thought, eccentricities of mood, or freaks of temperament.

VII

Limits to His Authority.

What limits can be set to His authority? The real tragedy of our time is the practical rejection of His spiritual and moral authority, yet the ground of actual controversy is found in the question as to His intellectual authority. It must be realised

that the frontiers, between these regions of authority, cannot be drawn by us with absolute certainty, and cases are conceivable where to reject Christ as Teacher for the mind is to disown Him as Lord for our conscience. C. J. Cadoux (*The Historic Mission of Jesus*, pp. 338-345) discusses "the relation between the teaching of Jesus (as reported by the Synoptists) and absolute truth This teaching contains certain elements which are, to all appearances, incompatible with beliefs which we cannot help regarding—under the guidance of the Divine Spirit—as indubitably true." The difficult questions dealt with are such as the Lord's Return, the attribution of illness and insanity to the malignant work of evil spirits, and the eternity of future punishment. Dr. Cadoux discusses various methods of dealing with these difficulties. One is to ascribe them to inaccurate reporting, but "the evidence that Jesus said these difficult things is exactly the same, in objective strength and inherent credibility, as that on which our whole knowledge of Him (and therefore also our belief in His Divinity) rests." Or we may hold that in such teaching our Lord was accommodating Himself to His hearers, but that is doubtfully ethical, and "it would mean that He consciously indoctrinated His hearers with a number of very serious beliefs about God which he believed to be false." These eschatological elements may be simply omitted as religiously unimportant—but they hold a central place in Christ's teaching. Or we may appeal to the peculiarly pictorial nature of the Oriental mind and spiritualize the teaching. Clearly, there is justification for this, but to interpret much of His teaching as figurative does not dispose of all the elements found objectionable. Two ways remain, according to Dr. C. J. Cadoux. The one he favours is to assume that Jesus's knowledge was "limited by the conditions of His race and education, that His eschatological teaching contains an element of human ignorance and error." The other is the way to which we believe we are led, "reverently to accept the reported teaching of Jesus as a Divine revelation of the actual truth of things." Such an acceptance by no means commits us to abstaining from, or opposing or discouraging the processes of, historical enquiry, textual investigation and exegetical labour, whereby students endeavour to ascertain what was originally said, and intended, by our Lord, for it is part of our obedience to His authority that we spare no pains to find out what His pronouncements actually are and mean. Even such questions as to whether,

and to what extent, human interpretation is mingled with the Gospel tradition in our present documents, are not foreclosed by entire intellectual authority of Christ, though caveats may be entered from other considerations. No charge of obscurantism can validly be made against those who wish to know only and precisely what our Lord really said, and whose motto thereafter is, "whatsoever He saith unto you, believe it." It seems reasonable, not only to enquire, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" but also, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to think?"

Dr. Cadoux's own position is one that ascribes to Christ an authority limited by fallibility. We admit the possibility of such an authority, for examples of it are found in the great teachers of the race. Apostolic authority is of this order. Fallibility, however, *prejudices* authority, whereas nescience only *limits* it. We refer to such nescience as our Lord stated concerning Himself in Mark xiii, 32. Here the nescience is clearly recognised and openly acknowledged: whilst therefore it limits His authority to that which He definitely claims to know and to teach, it actually strengthens the authority with which that teaching comes to us. Where the authority is held to be fallible, dubiety enters as to the general statements made by such a one. If Jesus believed that many would be ultimately lost, and would endure eternal punishment, and if this is "incapable of being harmonized with Jesus's picture of God as the *Father* of men or as the Shepherd who goes out in search for a single straying sheep," by what right do we select one of these incompatibilities as acceptable to our faith and reject the other? May not the painter of two incompatible portraits be unreliable in both? May not the fallibility affect the revelation of the Divine Fatherhood as well as that of Gehenna? To reject the teaching we find unwelcome, because it is inconsistent with other teaching we would prefer, is to accept the rule of the arbitrary. Dr. Cadoux realises the problem when he writes: "A revered Christian senior, with whom I was once discussing this question, observed that what we have to do is to judge Christ by Christ" (op. cit. 344). Our first impulse is to ask, "Is Christ divided?" If, however, this canon of judgment only meant that isolated details of our Lord's teaching are to be read in the light of the whole of His person and work, we should regard it as true and valid. Protestant exegesis has generally asserted that particular words of Scripture are to be interpreted by the general consent

of the Word of God ; that could not be held, however, to justify the rejection of clearly-attested teaching, which was inharmonious with anyone's own conception, of the Divine Teacher. If the Christ, of our own preference is set as Judge over the Christ depicted in the New Testament, the final authority is clearly our own judgment.

It is objected that the attitude we advocate, of complete acceptance of the ascertained teaching of our Lord, whatever the consequences, means either that we "force the plain meaning of the supposed revelation, so as to cause the incompatibility to disappear," or shut our eyes to the incompatibility, or "dismiss certain indubitable facts or firm convictions of our own as erroneous because incompatible with Divine revelation." The two former methods we would certainly regard as wrong, but the third course of action seems to us the right one to take—with the qualification that the facts which clash with the revelation are, precisely on that account, not "indubitable." Further, account must be taken of the fact that, in other realms of knowledge, there are instances where apparently irreconcilable facts have to be tenaciously held, awaiting the synthesis which further information, and developments, may bring. Moreover, the matters, concerning which the chief difficulty is felt to arise, are matters about which only a Divine Revelation can give us knowledge, and to reject that because of "firm convictions of our own" appears unwise.

This, of course, is an appeal to faith, but as A. M. Fairbairn said, "Christ's authority lives to faith and does not rest on force." That means that His authority becomes inward, without becoming merely subjective. Our freedom has its proper exercise, yet we are delivered from any purely subjective judgment of Christianity ; the latter is impracticable because (a) It has no constancy, but varies with varying moods and changing personalities ; (b) it cannot be proclaimed with certainty to others, and having no authoritative commission cannot be missionary ; and (c) it has no adequate sense of the Church universal. Dr. Denney wrote : "It is through experiences in which we become debtors to Jesus for meat and drink, for light and life, that we become conscious of what His Authority means." For the needs of body and soul, life and death, time and eternity, we are dependent on Him, and the realisation of our unlimited dependence makes us eager to acknowledge His unbounded authority.

DISCUSSION.

The Rev. CHAS. T. COOK said : Dr. Evans has made us his debtors for a singularly illuminating paper. There is no religious question more fundamental than the nature of Christ's authority, for our convictions in regard to it will determine our attitude to every vital problem in the Bible, and to every article of faith. The exposition of the theme presented to us this afternoon is the Evangelical reply to the extreme subjectivism of writers such as James Martineau in his *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, and Auguste Sabatier in his *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*.

The unique authority of our Lord seems to have been one of the things that most astonished the multitudes. "When Jesus ended these words [in the Sermon on the Mount], the multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. vii, 28). The scribes declared nothing on their own responsibility; they appealed always to tradition. As Dr. Denney says, "The message they delivered was not self-authenticating . . . [Christ] spoke the final truth; He laid down an ultimate law."

On the subject of the Media of Authority (section VI), I am wondering how Dr. Evans would relate the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the "threefold cord"—the Bible, the Church and Christian experience. No doubt he equates the Holy Spirit in part with "the voice within" and the "inner light," yet it is quite certain that he makes some distinction, for he speaks of the danger of the inner voice misleading men.

In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Evans for dealing so cogently with the views of Dr. Cadoux who not only attributes ignorance to our Lord in many of His pronouncements, but error. Unfortunately, that point of view is widespread. It seems at times to make little distinction between the development of our Lord's consciousness and that of an ordinary sinful man. Indeed, if Christ was subject to illusion and errors of judgment, it is difficult to hold fast to His moral and spiritual perfection. The Apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, is an outstanding example of how wrong thinking on matters religious leads directly to wrong actions.

In regard to the so-called Kenosis, the very form of the Pauline declaration, in Phil. ii, 7, is at least an implied rejection of many of the inferences from the words "He emptied Himself." Here we have no ordinary human limitation imposed by heredity and environment, but something vastly different—a voluntary "*self*-limitation." Only a pre-existent divine Being could "empty Himself" in the manner indicated in this passage, and I submit that the aphorism, "To err is human," has no relevance to One who was distinguished from other men not only by His sinlessness, but by the fact that His subliminal consciousness was that of Godhead. Moreover, as Dr. Evans points out, Christ's statement that He did not know the day or hour of His return "actually strengthens the authority with which His teaching comes to us." When a man tells us plainly of the limits of his knowledge, we can have confidence that he is making no affirmations unless he can speak with certainty.

Air Commodore WISEMAN said: Dr. Evans' very able paper is welcome because in a most realistic way it faces up to the ethical issues involved in the authoritative claims made by Christ. I submit that those claims were absolute; to sinlessness, to be the Truth, to be the Founder, Legislator and Judge in the Kingdom of God, to Deity. For a century it has been the fashion in some quarters to evade the issue by the introduction of the "Kenosis" and "Accommodation" theories. Many have wondered how long theologians could continue to hold these theories and at the same time accept Christ's statements about Himself. The effect of the first of these theories is to deny His knowledge, and of the second His truthfulness. Both deprive Him of His reliability and consequently His authority. In the minds of many the first implies a self-limitation of His knowledge, which made Him in many respects dependent upon "current Jewish notions" for His information; while the second theory implies that although He did know He accommodated Himself to the errors current around Him. It is sufficient to say that He spent His public Ministry cutting clean across the prevailing errors of His time. The accommodation theory implies that Christ knew the facts but accommodated His speech so as to bring them into accord with current errors. I am growingly astounded at the implications of this theory, especially as the men

who hold it are the men who say that when preaching or writing about a biblical subject they cannot feel absolutely honest unless they indicate that they have no belief in certain ideas promulgated by our Lord. This surely means that they themselves feel that they must maintain a higher degree of honesty than they attribute to our Lord.

Dr. Evans points out that Dr. C. J. Cadoux has abandoned the accommodation theory because it "is doubtfully ethical, and it would mean that He consciously indoctrinated His hearers with a number of very serious beliefs about God which He believed to be false."

In the end I believe that the other theory, the Kenosis, must also logically be given up and I think Dr. C. J. Cadoux has done this. In his *Pilgrim's Further Progress*, while writing of "the Lordship of Jesus," of "His unique goodness and power," and of His miracles, he refers to the "modern scholarly theologians" who retain the credal definition of Christ's Divinity "either by tacitly evading the whole difficulty, or by some form of the theory of Kenosis," which he defines as "a comparatively modern device, framed by non-Romanist theologians on the basis of Philippians, ii, 7," and he adds, "it is extremely doubtful whether a true exegesis of Philippians, ii, 7, furnishes any support for it; and there is certainly no other Scriptural or indeed any early non-Scriptural passage to warrant it." But Dr. Cadoux has not only rejected the Kenosis theory but the New Testament doctrine of Christ for he refrains from "the ascription of absolute Deity to Him," and his ideas about Christ do not differ from some forms of Unitarianism.

Thus, those who refuse to acknowledge our Lord's claims about Himself are in a dilemma, those who accept them have no need of the theories which rid Him of His authority.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION.

Rev. W. E. DALLING wrote: Many, doubtless, will express their thanks to Dr. Evans for this paper, but I would like to add mine for this real contribution to this most important subject.

May I submit the following remarks, in the hope that they may help towards the synthesis that is desired?

These comments refer to the apparent difficulty of harmonizing

Christ's teaching of eternal punishment with His teaching "of God as the Father of men . . .", and have two main points:—

(1) *That God's Fatherhood is essentially different from Human Fatherhood.*

As we are compelled to describe divine things by human terms, it is well to remember that "Fatherhood" is but a term of accommodation.

Because we cannot imagine a human father consigning his offspring to eternal punishment, we argue that eternal punishment cannot be harmonized with God's Fatherhood.

But there is this essential difference.

While human fatherhood implies that a life basically the same in nature is found in parent and offspring, the same is *not* true of God's Fatherhood in relation to humanity; moreover, Fatherhood is but one of the many relationships existing between God and man.

Whether we consider God's Fatherhood in—

(a) Creation: Lk. iii, 38; Gen. i, 27;

(b) Nationalistic Relation to Israel: Deut. xxxii, 6; Is. lxiii, 16;

(c) Regenerative Power: Jn. i, 12; 2 Pt. i, 4;

we have no authority for claiming that there is a oneness of life between God and the human race, between God and Israel, between God and the regenerate, similar to the oneness of life shared by parent and offspring. Neither Adam, Israel, nor the regenerate, is God with all His essential attributes. The created can never have underived life. Thus, our conception of the Fatherhood of God must be very different from our idea of a human fatherhood.

(2) *That the Fatherhood of God in the Bible is a Concept with a varying content.*

We find three conceptions of God's Fatherhood in Holy Writ, already indicated in our (a), (b), (c) above.

In connection with (b) we find

1. That much of our Lord's teaching, e.g., The Prodigal Son, is concerned with God's Nationalistic Fatherhood.
2. That many in Israel, who rejected Christ's teaching were told that the devil was their father.

We suggest that our Lord's teaching on the lost and their eternal punishment is in no conflict with the revelation either of the creative or of the nationalistic Fatherhood of God.

In connection with (c), God's Fatherhood by spiritual regeneration, our Lord's teaching is in perfect accord. Sonship through redemption and regeneration is the only state that gives eternal salvation and freedom from divine wrath. In Christ there are no lost. There can be no eternal punishment for those brought into such sonship.

We submit that the authority of Christ's teaching is upheld, for complete harmony is manifest in that :—

- (a) Christ teaches that only those who receive Him and are regenerated, have the divine nature that is necessary to spiritual sonship.
- (b) He teaches that the unregenerate only are lost ; not sons by regeneration.

May not these brief comments point toward the synthesis of Christ's teaching that is necessary to an unqualified acceptance of His authority ?

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

In reply to the Rev. Chas. T. Cook's question as to the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Bible, the Church and Christian experience, I think the correct answer would be that these three are media through which He speaks but since each medium has a kind of independent subsistence it is conceivable that the Spirit may be limited by it, as a violinist would be limited were he performing on an indifferent instrument. If the Bible is ill-translated, or its text faultily ascertained or its meaning misunderstood by mistaken exegesis, the voice of the Spirit may not be properly heard. When a Church becomes over-organised, and in the degree to which all Churches are disobedient to the Lord, we find it difficult to "hear what the Spirit saith in the Churches." There are many instances where the clamant voice of a man's inner self has been mistaken for the voice of the Holy Spirit. In practice, though, he who strives to check what he thinks to be the inward prompting of the Spirit

by the concurrent testimony of the Church, and—most of all—by the written word, will find that he has sufficient light and certainty. Of the three strands in the threefold cord, the Bible is least liable to limit the Spirit Who speaks in it.

Air Commodore Wiseman makes an important point when he draws attention to the compulsion which some teachers feel to repudiate explicitly ideas promulgated by our Lord, whilst they yet suggest that He Himself refrained from explicitly rejecting contemporaneous ideas which He cannot possibly have held.

The Rev. W. E. Dalling gives a very helpful classification of the different senses in which the idea of Divine Fatherhood is used in the Scriptures. I should add the common employment of the term "son of" to indicate moral resemblance. I think however, that the distinction would not fully meet the case of those who regard Eternal Punishment as inconsistent, not only with the Divine Fatherhood, but with the Divine goodness. Put otherwise, they would say that such punishment would be impossible, not only to a father in the case of his son, but also to any good man in relation to anyone under his authority. Mr. Dalling will doubtless agree that the answer is manifold, including the arguments (1) that Fatherhood does not exhaust the relationship of God to man ; (2) that the human metaphor must not be conceived as fully adequate to set forth a divine fact ; (3) that the reluctance we feel to contemplate such a fate for anyone must be infinitely less than that felt by Him Who wept over Jerusalem ; (4) that He therefore would only have said such things if they were indisputable ; (5) that the fate of the lost should be set against the grace they reject ; (6) finally, that on such a theme revelation is our supreme source of information, rather than speculation, and the revelation about eternal punishment is as well warranted in Scripture as the Parable of the Prodigal Son.