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The Living Personality of Christ

BY

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Education and Environment.

CHRIST, though born at Bethlehem, belonged to a remote little village in the out-of-the-way province of Galilee. So little did men think of it that the guileless Nathaniel thought to dismiss for ever the question of the divine mission of Christ with the words of scorn: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"¹ It was a hillside village where one would not expect, in those days, either culture or learning. Humble, too, were His parents; humble were they even among the Nazarenes, for there is subtle innuendo in that query of the neighbors when, later, they were surprised at the doctrines which fell from His lips: "How came this man by all these things?.....Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon. Are not also His sisters here with us?"² As much as to say: "What could one expect out of Joseph the carpenter's workshop?"

We know nothing of Jesus' childhood or boyhood. The query I have given suggests that he got no education; and the later query of the Jews: "How doth this man know letters, having never learned?"³ bears out the same conclusion. In all probability His life was prosaic enough; He had to run errands for His mother; He played in the streets with other little ones of the village. There was, we may be sure, very little of the glamor which apocryphal writers love to fling round His childhood days; the authors

1. John i, 46.

2. Mark vi, 3.

3. John vii, 15.

whom we are following pass, with true historical instinct, over those first twelve years of His life without the narration of a single incident, except the flight into Egypt.

Then suddenly the veil is lifted, but only for a moment. The scene is changed to the Temple of Jerusalem, that gorgeous creation of Herod's, which was the pride of the entire Jewish nation. We pass through its many courtyards, our ears deafened by the clangor of the money-changers, or of the dealers disposing of their wares for sacrificial purposes; we pass up the steps and enter one of the rooms where the theologians of the day were in Council gathered listening to the words of wisdom which fell from the lips of this twelve-year-old youngster from Nazareth. His parents, we are told, found Him "sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard were astonished at His wisdom and His answers."⁴ Well might they be astonished if they fully realized His antecedents. Once more the curtain drops on eighteen years of the boyhood and manhood of Christ. It is dismissed with the simple words: "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."⁵ Once more the prosaic life of the villager, this time learning His trade in Joseph's shop, and trying to meet the wishes of His rustic customers.

Yet, Christ was an Orator.

"Can any good come out of Nazareth?" queried Nathaniel. Could one in reason expect that the product of such circumstances would prove an orator on whose words gentle and simple would hang in rapt amazement; an orator who spoke with an eloquence unequalled by the greatest orators

4. Luke ii, 47.

5. Luke ii, 51.

for its sublimity, simplicity, and literary finish. Shakespeare, we are told, learned at his school little Latin and less Greek, yet he became a great poet; there is, however, the difference that Shakespeare in later days had opportunities such as few dramatists have had, for he moved amongst the elite of the *littérateurs* of his day. But the Man from Nazareth never had this good fortune, for He stepped forth after His thirty years in the carpenter's shop into the first place among the preachers of His day. Even the Baptist, than whom a greater was not born of woman, was eclipsed by the glory of Him to Whom he bore testimony: to Him "the latchet of Whose shoe he was not worthy to loose."⁶

Men left their quiet homes and avocations. Matthew left his comfortable position in the counting house; Peter and James and John broke up their Fishing Company; Bartholomew left his books; they all left everything and followed Him. Left everything, did I say? Yea, left everything, for when He was asked to show His home to a would-be follower. He replied: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."⁷ And they left all, for He sent them forth with the injunction: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff . . . Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . for they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues, and you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake.....and you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake."⁸ Great indeed, must have been the power which could so sway the hearts of men;

6. Luke iii. 16. 7. Matt. viii. 20. 8. Matt. x. 10-22.

great the power which could make the multitudes follow now in their four, now in their five thousands without food or sleep, till He had compassion on them and produced a miraculous repast for them from some bread and fishes. Great indeed must have been the eloquence which made His enemies admit that "never did man speak like this man."⁹

The Simplicity of His Style.

And yet His language was simple. He drew His similes from the ordinary things of everyday life. But He used them with consummate skill to illustrate truths which even the Jews, with their centuries of Revelation, had never known, or never grasped. The flowers of the field, the corn by the wayside; the nets of the fishermen; the sand on the shore; the shepherd and his sheep; the housewife and her broom; the water-carrier and his leathern bottles—He pressed into His service to point a moral or stamp a doctrine on the simple imaginations of His hearers.

Let us see how He does it. The Jews were, and had been, a worldly race who set much store by the goods of the world, and many a time had turned their backs upon the Lord for the flesh-pots of life. It had required the patience of a God to bear with their back-slidings; He had hedged them around with loving care; He had sent them His prophets and they killed them, till in despair, He cried out: "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it."¹⁰ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," cried out the Christ in despair one day, as He gazed on the city from a neighboring hill and thought of the things that were, and that would be: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the

9. John vii. 46.

10. Isaias v. 4.

prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not?"¹¹ And this is the same people to whom Christ preached His doctrine, that they should not take care for the morrow's food, but should love their Lord and God; this the people to whom He said: "If any man will follow Me let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me";¹² and again: "Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you, by taking thought, can add a cubit to his stature? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, oh ye of little faith."¹³ "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows."¹⁴

And again: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and

11. Luke xiii. 34.

13. Matt. vi. 25 seq.

12. Mark viii. 34.

14. Luke xii.

where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."¹⁵

Or take this other illustration drawn from everyday life, instilling the same doctrine, and watch carefully the development of the thought: "A certain man made a great supper and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things were ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm and I must needs go out and see it; I pray hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. But I say to you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper. *And there went a great multitude with Him,* and turning He said to them: If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be my disciple."¹⁶ Strange, very strange, talk, this, from a mere carpenter of Nazareth.

15. Matt. vi. 19.

16. Luke xiv. 16 seq.

The Sublimity of His teaching.

Then consider the sublimity of the doctrine which He taught; its sublimity as distinct from the form in which He clothed it. He singles out for special inculcation the virtues which are most difficult for human nature, and speaks of them with that easy familiarity which betrays the fact that He is Himself a past-master in their exercise: "You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other; and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away. You have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth on the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."¹⁷

And again: "When thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogue and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. And when

17. Matt. v. 39 seq.

thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth, that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men . . . but thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret."¹⁸ He had no place for the hypocrites who prayed long prayers that they might be seen by men; rather He preferred the humble prayers of the publican who, hidden away at the door of the temple, cried from the bottom of his heart: "Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner";¹⁹ and He thought more of the widow who dropped her mite into the alms-box than of the wealthy who cast their rich gifts into the treasury: "Verily I say to you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all."²⁰

He preached humility and love of the poor, in a way that these doctrines had never been preached before. When the disciples of John came to inquire if He were indeed the Messiah, He told them to tell John what they had seen: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and"—last but conclusive proof—"to the poor the Gospel is preached."²¹ When His disciples were puffed up at the thought of the high places which they were to hold in the new kingdom, He told them that He had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto others;²² that the disciple was not above the Master;²³ and He gave practical proof of His readiness to make

18. Matt. vi. 2 seq.

20. Luke xxi. 3.

22. Matt. xx. 28.

19. Luke xviii. 13.

21. Luke vii. 22.

23. Luke vi. 40.

a servant of Himself when He set Himself to wash the feet of His disciples.²⁴

He Lived up to His Teaching.

He not merely preached this high code of ethics; He lived up to it. He fasted, but He retired into the desert to do it;²⁵ and so little were His mortifications seen by men that the Pharisees charged Him with being a wine-bibber and a glutton. Knowing the insincerity of the men who had levelled these charges at Him, men who would have found other excuses to vilify Him if this were not to hand, He one day rounded on them, and in an eloquent piece of denunciation He thus trounced them: "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the market-place and speaking to one another, and saying: We have piped to you and you have not danced; we have mourned and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say: He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners."²⁶

He prayed, but when He prayed it was away from the haunts of men. "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in prayer of God;"²⁷ and again, "it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray;²⁸ and again, "having dismissed the multitude He went into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, He was

24. John xiii. 5.

25. Matt. iv. 1.

26. Luke viii. 34. 27. Luke vi. 12. 28. Luke ix, 28.

there alone,"²⁹ and so on. No trace here of the spirit of the Pharisees who said long prayers in the market-places that they might be seen by men.

His heart went out to the lowly and the sinners. It was one of the charges against Him that He was a friend of publicans and sinners.³⁰ He frequently championed them against their self-satisfied neighbors. When Mary, the Magdalen, came to Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and anointed His feet to the disgust of His host, who concluded in his heart, from the action, that Christ was no prophet, else He would not have tolerated the presence of the Magdalen, He quietly turned to Simon, and said: "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee."³¹ And when He had done, Simon was not worth much.

And again, when they brought to Him a woman taken in adultery to discover if He was prepared to apply the penalty of stoning imposed by Moses on such sinners, His heart went out to the poor creature whose sin He found less heinous than the hypocrisy of the self-righteous Pharisees, and He championed her thus: "But Jesus bowing Himself down, wrote with His finger upon the ground. When, therefore, they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, He wrote on the ground. But they hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest. . . . Then, Jesus lifting up Himself, said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."³²

29. Matt. xiv. 23.

31. Luke vii. 36 seq.

30. Matt. xi. 19.

32. John viii. 3 seq.

On the Cross, too, He was true to His teachings and His life. There is a wealth of meaning in that pathetic "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"³³ though they were still hurling their mockery at Him: "Vah, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross,"³⁴ and "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Again, to the poor thief who had been touched with pity and love at the sight of such nobility as the Christ had displayed, and had tried to stem at least the insults of his fellow-thief, He turned with the words of forgiveness and consolation: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."³⁵

But it is needless to multiply instances. We have the parable of the Prodigal Son,³⁶ that parable which has brought hope to many a despairing heart, and set it once again on the way of righteousness; the parable of the shepherd,³⁷ who leaves the ninety-nine in the desert and goes to seek for the lost one of the flock, and having found it brings it home on his shoulder, and calls the neighbors to rejoice because the sheep that had been lost is found.

Yet for all this His enemies could never convict Him of a single fault though He repeatedly challenged them to convict Him of sin, and when He was brought before Pilate and Herod, for all their false testimony the verdict was that they found no guilt in Him.³⁸ "I have sinned," said Judas, and Judas ought to know, "in betraying innocent blood."³⁹

Neither Snob nor Demagogue.

His was a character at once gentle and firm. "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me,"⁴⁰ He said in mild reproach to

33. Luke xxiii. 34. 34. Matt. xxvii. 40.
 35. Luke xxiii. 43. 36. Luke xv. 37. Id.
 38. Luke xxiii. 4. 39. Matt. xxvii. 4. 40. Mark x. 14.

the apostles when they would drive away the mothers who would insist on crowding around to hold up their little ones for His blessing. "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."⁴¹ He had compassion on the multitude as He looked over the unhappy ones who were straying as sheep without a shepherd.⁴² To oblige His mother and save a newly-married couple confusion at their marriage-feast, He anticipated the time of His public mission and worked a miracle;⁴³ He healed the daughter of the Syrophenician mother who pleaded so pathetically with Him that He would extend His mercy to an outcast race: "Even the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their master."⁴⁴

He knew how to yield when there was no principle at stake; but He was absolutely inflexible when there was a question of principle. He would not yield an inch when the rich young man, who had observed the commandments from his youth, was not prepared to sell all and come and follow Him. Rather did He prefer to let him go away sorrowful with his great possessions,⁴⁵ and take as His disciples men like Peter who left, or were prepared to leave, their all, though it was but a fishing-boat and a few nets, to follow Him.⁴⁶ No, He was no snob, and He hated snobbery in all its forms. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,"⁴⁷ He said, and His words cannot have been palatable; and that parable of Dives and Lazarus⁴⁸ must have offended the polite susceptibilities of the Jewish grandees. But He would not mince matters. They might,

41. Matt. xviii. 3.

44. Matt. xv. 27.

47. Matt. xix, 24.

42. Mark vi. 34.

45. Mark x.

48. Luke xvi. 19.

43. John ii.

46. Matt. iv. 20.

as they did, sweep Him to the verge of a cliff to throw Him over in their rage; they might threaten to stone Him; they might gnash their teeth at Him, yet calm and collected He continued to inveigh against their hypocrisy and their hardness of heart. Listen to this from Him of whom John had said: "The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish;"⁴⁹ this unforgivable invective against the masters of the land: "Woe to you, Pharisees, because you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place. Woe to you, because you are as sepulchres that appear not, and men that walk over, are not aware . . . Woe to you lawyers also, because you load men with burdens which they cannot bear, and you yourselves touch not the packs with one of your fingers. Woe to you who build the monuments of the prophets; and your fathers killed them. . . Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those who were entering in, you have hindered . . . Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."⁵⁰ And on one occasion He bade one of the Pharisees take back the answer to Herod who threatened to kill Him: "Go and tell that fox, Behold! I cast out devils and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated."⁵¹ The money-changers He drove headlong from the temple beneath His lash, because they had made God's house a den of thieves.⁵² He never deviated a hair's breadth from an odious duty, though it meant an ever-increasing accumulation of enemies.

Nor was it that, by thus lashing the great ones of the day, He hoped to curry for Himself popular favor; nor did He

49. Matt. xii. 20.

51. Luke xii. 32.

50. Luke xi. xii.

52. Matt. xxi.

work His miracles for any such purpose: "Go now and tell no man,"⁵³ was a very frequent injunction of His. Yet His fame did get abroad and spread through all that country, and frequently He had to fly lest people should come and seek to make Him king.⁵⁴ And all this time He was completely dependent on the alms of the people: we may be sure from the way that He defended the action of His disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath that they were in need of food when they did so;⁵⁵ we may be sure that He Himself went without scrip for His journey as He directed His disciples to do, and we find that when He urgently required a coin to pay the temple tribute for Himself and His disciples He had to work a miracle to enable Him to do so.⁵⁶

Christ was Kind.

He was a Man of warm, kindly disposition, who poured Himself out in love of His fellowmen. The gospels sum up His work in the few simple words: "He went about doing good." He gives us some of the details Himself, in a passage which I have already mentioned: "The blind see and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead rise again, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

Wherever He saw human suffering, there His kind heart was stirred to immediate action: a power went out from Him and He healed all. Now it was the raising to life of

53. Matt. vii. 4; Mark, viii. 26, 30; Luke v. 14; viii. 56.

54. John vi. 15. 55. Matt. xii. 1. 56. Matt. xvii. 26.

the only son of a mother: "and she was a widow,"⁵⁷ the scripture significantly adds; again, it was the healing of a woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and who had bestowed all her substance on physicians and could not be healed by any;⁵⁸ again it was the expulsion of a devil from the son of a distracted father who cried out in his agony: "I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief"⁵⁹; yet again, with groaning and anguish of spirit at the sorrow of Martha and Mary, He summoned Lazarus from the tomb into which Mary dreaded to look, for he had been already interred for four days.⁶⁰

He was ever preaching the doctrine of brotherly love, or as He sometimes put it, love of the neighbor. "Love one another as I have loved you,"⁶¹ is His counsel to His disciples. Love is the fulfilment of the Law; do unto others as you would wish others to do unto you, and this without distinction of race or of clime: the Samaritan is a neighbor as much as the Jew. Such were the teachings of this great Master.⁶²

The Great Test of Christ.

And then came the last great test of His virtue, an ignominious death as a common criminal on a cross. Fully acquainted with all the horrors of the death that was before Him, His nature shrank from them, yet facing it manfully, He bent His will before His Father's will, and humbly prayed "Not My will but Thine be done." To Judas, His betrayer, He is kind, and allows him to imprint the kiss of treachery on His cheek, though it must have burned to the

57. Luke vii. 12.

59. Mark ix, 23.

61. John xv. 12.

58. Luke viii. 43.

60. John xi. 39.

62. Luke x. 29.

marrow of His bones; to the taunts of Pilate and Herod He answers never a word; to Peter's emphatic assertions that he knew Him not, He merely listened with sorrow, and turned on the traitor such a look of sadness that Peter rushed abroad and wept bitterly; through His agony He preserved such a calm dignity that Pilate wondered exceedingly; and even amidst His dying anguish He had a thought for the penitent thief, for the people who were crucifying and reviling Him, and above all, for the mother who loved Him, for He committed her to the care of the beloved disciple, apparently the only apostle who followed Him to Calvary.

Rationalistic Testimony—The Perfect Man.

Christ's was a noble character as even the enemies of the Christian Faith are prepared to admit. Take the following from Mr. Lecky, the great Rationalist historian, who certainly could not be suspected of overpartiality to Christianity: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists."—European Morals. Vol. II. Men of the type of Rousseau have so expressed their admiration of His doctrine and perfection that one wonders how they found themselves still unbelievers; men of the type of Harnack, the great German Rationalist critic, are lost in admiration

at the sublimity of the moral teaching of Christ: he is a man, they say, who has rest and peace in his own soul, and can give life to the souls of others.

Was He God?

And *this paragon of all perfection repeatedly claimed to be God*. And He did so deliberately, as one having perfect consciousness of what He spoke about. One does not require such conditions as Christ required of His followers if one merely wishes to build up a school of admirers, and if one is not convinced of the reality of one's mission. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."⁶³ He insisted to the letter on the fulfilment of such conditions when He refused to admit the young man who had great possessions unless he sold all and gave to the poor, and when to another He said: "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead."⁶⁴ And was it an invitation likely to tempt a following when He told them: "You shall be hated by all men for My name's sake."⁶⁵

No; such an One must have spoken as One having power, and He must have spoken in a way to convince His hearers. And, indeed, He was sufficiently explicit in His claims to be God. He claimed to be One with the Father, and to have come from the bosom of the Father. "Before Abraham was made, I am,"⁶⁶ He replied to His interrogators, in the very words that God used to Moses from the burning bush when He said: "I am who am,"⁶⁷ and His claim was

63. Luke xiv. 26.

65. Matt. x. 22.

64. Matt. viii. 22.

66. John viii. 58.

67. Ex. iii. 14.

so well understood to be a claim to divinity that His hearers thought He blasphemed and took up stones to cast at Him.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life," He said on another occasion... "If you had known Me, you would without doubt have known My Father also; and from henceforth you shall know Him, and you have seen Him. Philip said to Him: Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus saith to him: so long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me? Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, show us the Father?"⁶⁸

He had no hesitation in setting Himself over as law-giver against God Himself. "You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.....But I say to you, love your enemies."⁶⁹ Could any but such as believed himself to be God arrogate to himself such authority?

But enough; right across the face of the Gospels is the claim of Divinity, and in proof of His claim He points to His miracles. Of the fact of His claim there can be no doubt, explain it as we will.

And how are we to explain it? How, except by an admission of its truth?

Was Christ Deceived or Deceitful?

The possibility that Christ was an upstart and a false prophet can at once be ruled out. It is too much to suppose that He Who was admittedly the most perfect of men should have been consciously a deceiver. We do not find those who are consciously deceitful too ready to seal their deceit with their blood, yet we find Jesus, still comporting Himself with the same calm dignity as of old, dignity such that we are told

68. John xiv. 6 seq.

69. Matt. v. 38-44.

Pilate wondered exceedingly at it—we find Him once more, asserting His claim at a time when they were prepared to use it in testimony against Him. “And they brought Him to their Council, saying: If thou be the Christ, tell us. And He saith to them: If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me. And if I shall also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go. But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all: Art Thou then the Son of God? Who said: You say, that I am. And they said: What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth.”⁷⁰ Once again we have the Christ confronted with His enemies after that terrible night with the Roman soldiery, calm and collected as ever, with a trace of quaint humor, turning their peculiar interrogative into an admission of His divinity.

Nor is there about Christ anything of the character of a man who is laboring under a delusion. He plays His part too well and too logically to be merely a man with a fixed idea; we could not conceive a true God-man acting the part better. There is no aggressiveness, no self-assertion, no tendency to impress the fact needlessly on others. The apostles, indeed, were at one time thoroughly dissatisfied with Him for not putting the matter of His divine claim once for all beyond doubt: “Lord, how is it, that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us, and not to the world?”⁷¹ they asked. It would be certainly curious that the idea should have lain dormant from the time when He was twelve, when He was about His Father’s business in the Temple, through those eighteen years when He was subject to them in Nazareth, till at last it was brought home to Him at the instigation of

70. Luke xxii. 67 seq.

71. John xiv. 22.

His mother at the marriage feast of Cana. Plainly no trace of it had appeared during those eighteen years, for the neighbors of His own country were astonished when they found the Son of Joseph, Whose father and mother they knew, grown to the dimensions of a prophet and a hero.⁷² Curious, too, that He should constantly appeal to His works to prove His sincerity: "If you do not believe Me, believe My works;"⁷³ and never once did the apostles suspect Him during the period of their close intercourse with Him: certainly not till that last sad night when in terror they fled from Gethsemani; and even then their flight was the result rather of shock than of want of faith in Him. Peter followed Him to Pilate's hall, and fled only when his own life was threatened. John recovered so quickly that he was present the next day on the hill of Calvary trying to sustain the bereaved mother. Even Judas, at the hour of His betrayal, believed that He would be able to escape from the hands of his enemies, and merely hoped in his avarice to secure a few shillings unknown to the Master; he was so surprised at the ultimate result, that he went and hanged himself in despair.

The Influency of Christ's Teaching on the World.

We may judge of the value of Christ's teaching and personality by its effect upon mankind. Indeed, in this way, perhaps, does its sublimity come home to us more than in any other. Be He God or be He man, His example and teaching has revolutionized the outlook of the human race.

"We may readily admit," says Kant—and Kant as you know, thought out matters for himself—"we may readily admit that, had not the Gospels first taught the general moral

72. Mark vi. 3.

73. John x., 38.

principles in their full purity, our intellect would not even now understand them so perfectly." Not Plato, not Aristotle, not Socrates, but Christ it was who taught man the dignity of man and the dignity of woman. Not Plato, nor Aristotle, nor Socrates, nor Kant, nor Hegel, nor the rest have been able to attract to themselves and their teachings a host of admirers who are prepared to follow them to the death. But it is otherwise with Christ. The same spirit of enthusiasm for His personality that made Peter and Paul roam the earth to die at last by the executioner's hand at Rome; that made the youthful Agnes flout the tempter and bow her neck before the sword; that made the lovely Cecilia face the scorching flames of the callidarium, and then the headman's axe; that made Sebastian stand and look at every nerve of his body pierced with the quivering arrows which would send him to his beloved Master; that made Lawrence, on his roasting gridiron, banter with his executioners; and that drenched the sands of the Coliseum in a sea of blood; that spirit which made proud Rome tremble before a power unseen; that in after ages made Ignatius and Assisi revel in beggary, and sent a Xavier forth to die in solitude in Sancian in sight of his beloved China, yearning to bring the knowledge of the Master to the countless millions there—that spirit lives to-day to send our men as missionaries across the world, and induce our women to go forth to pick the little mites of beggars' children off the streets, and tramp the world to beg the bread to rear them. No. Your philosophers could never do it. (Pagan Missions, March 1924.)



Divine Revelation.

The Need of Revelation and Its Effects

(a) The Meaning of "Revelation."

Revelation means the manifestation of something new. Thus nature constantly manifests new facts and teachings to minds open to receive them. Divine Revelation means God's manifestation to us of truths concerning Himself and His relation to us; in other words, what we must believe and do if we would gain eternal life.

Do you believe that such Revelation is necessary, and that God has actually given it? Or do you say that it is not necessary, that men get on very well without it, and that there is no real proof that God has ever made any such Revelation? In the latter case you are wrong.

(b) Revelation is necessary.

If this is true, then it must also be true that God has made such a Revelation. For He would never deprive us of what is necessary. But is Revelation necessary? Reason can discuss such questions as the existence of God and His nature, but such intellectual gropings do not lead us all the way; nor do they completely satisfy us. All men crave happiness, yet no one has ever found anything which will absolutely satisfy us; all pleasures are transient; what appeals to the young will not content the old, and *vice-versa*. Vatican Council says reason does tell us **with certainty** of God's existence, etc.

Reason shows that God is the Supreme Good; can we imagine anything short of the Supreme Good affording us perfect happiness and permanent satisfaction? Can reason show that we are meant to secure possession of this Supreme Good or if that is so, how? No, reason can suggest, but it

cannot prove what we are to believe and do, if we would gain that supreme happiness which is the final possession of God.

Yet the desire is there, rooted in our nature; and God must satisfy a craving which He, the author of our nature, created. In other words:—**Revelation is necessary; God must reveal Himself to us.**

(c) **Revelation is a fact.**

Revelation is necessary, and therefore, since God is just, He must have revealed Himself to us. But where has He actually done so? The Bible says so and claims to contain that Revelation. Men have long dissected the Bible, but they have never disproved its claim.

Yet even granting the Bible's claim, difficulties still remain, for men interpret the Bible differently. Yet the Bible itself furnishes us with an ultimate court of appeal which shall decide the meaning of the Bible itself. For while the Old Testament points to Christ to come, the New Testament shows that He has come, that He is God made man, and that He founded a Church which should, to the end of time, teach authoritatively what precisely God had revealed, and show how those teachings should be put into practice.

(d) **The effects.**

of such a revelation may be summed up in **SECURITY**. If God has so spoken and has left us in His Church an authoritative interpreter of His Revelation, then a Christian is secure as regards what he must believe and do, if he would obtain the final possession of God, the supremely satisfying Good. This "security" is far-reaching. Its possessor is not "blown about by every wind of doctrine"; he is secure in knowledge of a service of God which will ensure eternal life; he only fears lest he fail to practise what he knows. Yet even here he has the security arising from the grace of God promised to all who seek it.

The opposite of this security we see around us in the endless religious discussions, in the prevailing despair at arriving at certainty, in the pursuit of pleasure which

never really satisfies the heart, but produces greater unhappiness. Hence the prevailing selfishness; men seek their own comfort; they snatch at pleasure for to-morrow we die, and they have no certainty of life after death. They scoff at heaven and hell, reward and punishment, the immortality of the soul, and even the moral law; hence they have no peace, only fear.

Which do you prefer: the security readily obtainable and based on the necessity and fact of a Divine Revelation—or the insecurity due to regarding our fallible individual human reason as the supreme and only guide? The latter is **folly**—the former is **wisdom**.



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(Signed)

PETER CARDINAL GASPARRI.