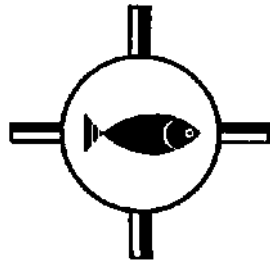


LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



Unit 1

PREPARATORY DIALOGUE ON THEOLOGY

Paper 1

RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

Excerpts from the writings of R. J. Campbell

PART I



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 CONTENT

RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY - THE NAME AND THE SITUATION.....	4
Religion and Theology.....	4
GOD AND THE UNIVERSE	7
Every Man Believes in God	8
MAN IN RELATION TO GOD.....	10
What is Man?	10
The Subconscious Mind	11
The Higher Self.....	11
The Unity of Humanity.....	12
The Self is God.....	12
Its Relation to Free Will.....	13
Only the Infinite Has Perfect Freedom	13
THE NATURE OF EVIL.....	15
The problem not insoluble.....	15
The relation of evil and pain	15
The true extent of the problem of pain	16
The purpose of pain	17
The nature of sin	17
The Fall.....	18
The Genesis account	18
Divine immanence and its Fall	21
The truth beneath the doctrine of the Fall	22
JESUS THE DIVINE MAN	23
The Jesus of traditional theology.....	23
Godhead and manhood	24

Jesus Christ and Deity.....	25
THE ETERNAL CHRIST.....	27
The basic assumption of thought.....	27
The moral basis of the doctrine of the Trinity.....	27
The divine Man.....	29
The Christ of St. Paul.....	29



RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY - THE NAME AND THE SITUATION

RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Religion is one thing and theology another, but religion is never found apart from a theology of some kind, for theology is the intellectual articulation of religious experience. No sooner does man attempt to understand or express his experience of the relations of God and the soul than he finds himself in possession of a theology. The religious experience may be a very good one and the theology a very bad one, but still religion and theology are necessary to each other, and it is a man's duty to try to make his theology as nearly as possible an adequate and worthy expression of his religion.

He will never succeed in doing this in a permanent fashion, for the content of religious experience is, or should be, greater than any form of statement. But theology is everyone's business. We cannot afford to leave it to experts or refrain from forming our own judgment upon the pronouncements of experts. Neither should theology be confounded with ecclesiasticism. The battle with ecclesiasticism has long since been decided, and civilization has nothing to fear from the official priest. No, the real danger of spiritual religion, and therefore, to the immediate future of mankind in every department of thought and action, still arises from practical materialism on the one hand and an antiquated dogmatic theology on the other. Everyone knows that, broadly speaking, certain ways of stating Christian truth are taken for granted; the popular or generally accepted theology of all the churches of Christendom, Catholic and Protestant alike, is fundamentally the same, and somehow, the modern mind has come to distrust it. (It is important that you make a note of this. Not to cast a shadow upon the established and well known large denominations, but to see how it is quite understandable that a form of worship such as the Liberal Catholic Church could reasonably have come into existence. Ed.)

There is a curious want of harmony between our ordinary views of life and conventional religious beliefs. Many lives are lived upon one set of assumptions during six days of the week and a quite different set on Sunday in church. The average man feels this without perhaps quite realizing what is the matter. All he knows is that the propositions he has been taught to regard as a full and perfect statement of Christianity have little or nothing to do with his everyday experience; they seem to belong to a different world. He does not know how comparatively modern this popular presentation of Christianity is. What is wanted therefore is a restatement of the essential truth of the Christian religion in terms of the modern mind.

(Those who believe that the fundamentals of the Christian faith must be rearticulated in terms of the immanence of God will find an echo of this view in the Liberal Catholic Church. It is one of the major standpoints which are reflecting in its Statement of Principles. Ed.)

Those who take this view do not hold that there is any need for a new religion, but that the forms in which these religions are commonly presented are inadequate. What is wanted is freshness and simplicity of statement. This viewpoint is not new except in the sense that it seeks to substitute simplicity for complexity and to get down to moral values in its use of religious terms. Our objection is not so much to the venerable creeds of Christendom as to the ordinary interpretations of those creeds. We hold that the Christian experience which comes to the world through our Lord only requires to be freed from limitations in order to inspire once more the people of God.

This view is an untrammelled return to the Christian sources in the light of modern thought. Its starting point is a re-emphasis of the Christian belief in the divine immanence in the universe and in mankind. This doctrine is not new, but requires to be placed effectively in the

foreground Christian standpoints. In the past, the doctrine of the divine transcendence that is, the obvious truth that the infinite being of God must transcend the infinite universe - has been presented in such a way as to amount to a practical dualism, and to lead men to think of God as above and apart from His world instead of expressing Himself through His world. This dualism is practical, not theoretical, but that it exists is plain enough from such statements as that of the theologian who speaks of God's "eternal eminence, and His descent on a created world."

This kind of theologizing leads straight to the conclusion that God is to all intents and purposes quite distinct from His creation, although He possesses a full and accurate knowledge of all that goes on in it and reserves to Himself the right to interfere. In what sense language like this leaves room for the divine immanence it is difficult to see. A better view is that we know but little and can know nothing of the Infinite Cause whence all things proceed except as we read Him in His universe and in our own souls. It is the immanent God with Whom we have to do, and if this obvious fact is once firmly grasped, it will simplify all our religious conceptions and give us a working faith.

For a generation or more in every part of Christendom, there has been a steady drift away from organized religion as represented by the churches. Women frequently form the majority of the worshippers at an ordinary service. Intelligent men take little notice of clergy and sermons, and the theologically-minded layman is such a rarity as to be noteworthy. Most significant of all, perhaps is the fact that much of the moral earnestness of the nation and of social redemptive effort exists outside the churches altogether. There is a great deal of criticism of the large churches, yet it must be recognized that in almost any ordinary church today brave and self-denying work is being done for the common good, but this does not invalidate the general statement. In France, during the Revolution, the populace turned frantically upon the established faith, tore it to shreds, burlesqued it, and set up the worship of the Goddess of Reason, as they called it, typified by a Parisian harlot. In England, a devitalized Deism laid its chilly hand not only upon the world of scholars and men of letters, but even upon the church. An English king is reported to have said that half his bishops were atheists.

And yet, somehow, religion reasserted itself. Napoleon, with shrewd insight, realized that the people could not do without it, and so affected the Concordat with Rome, (now dissolved). Today, we may witness a growing trend in countries behind the Iron Curtain. Though officially churches and church-going is discouraged, the authorities contend with the on-going need and desire for religious services. Wesley began the movement in England which has since created the largest Protestant denomination in the world; Germany produced a succession of great preachers and scholars the like of whom had hardly ever been known in Europe before.

In a remote way, the labour movements are in reality the expression of the Holy Spirit, and only need to recognize themselves as such in order to become irresistible. Social justice and human rights need to be hitched to the star of religious faith. Have the churches spiritual energy enough to recover their position? If they consent to be bound by dogmatic statements inherited from the past, they are doomed. The world is not listening to theologians today. (If there is any ear lent to a well known preacher, it is usually done with tolerance and patience, but hardly with acceptance has it required to implement their statements into the life veins of the nation. Ed.)

They are on the periphery, not at the heart of things. They represent the great rolling river of thought. The greatest of all the causes of drift from the churches is the fact that Christian truth has become associated in the popular mind with certain forms of statement which thoughtful men find it impossible to accept not only on intellectual but even on moral grounds. Certain dogmatic belief, for example, about the Fall, the scriptural basis of revelation, the blood-atonement, the meaning of salvation, the punishment of sin, heaven and hell, are not only misleading, but unethical. How many really believe in these notions as popularly assumed and presented, and what have they to do with Christianity? They do not square with the facts of life, much less do they interpret life. They go straight in the teeth of the scientific method, which,

even where the Christian facts are concerned, is the only method which carries weight with the modern mind.

The consequence is that religion has come to be thought of as something apart from ordinary everyday life, a matter of churches, creeds, and Bible readings, instead of what it really is, - the coordinating principle of all our activities.

There are many social activities in connection with Christian churches. They are quite admirable in their way, and often produce excellent results, but they imply another gospel than the one supposed to be preached. Many churches owe their present existence more to social involvement than their doctrine.

This, then, is the situation. Where is the remedy to be found?

What is wanted is the driving force, which will enable the Christianity to fulfil its mission of inspiring the world, or, to put it better still, will serve to bring to mankind that real living faith in God and the spiritual meaning of life. Hardly anyone would deny that the world is waiting for this, man is not irreligious. On the contrary, there is no subject of such general interest as religion; it takes precedence of all other subjects just because all other subjects are implied in it. Religion is man's response to the call of the universe; it is the soul turning towards its source. How could it fail to be of absorbing interest? What is wanted is a message charged with spiritual power, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Mere dogmatic assertions will not do. This divine message is to be known from the fact that it illuminates life and appeals to the deepest and truest in the soul of man. That message is here now. It is the spirit which has been the inspiration of every great religious awakening since the world began. To associate it with any one personality is to belittle the subject and to obscure its real significance. There are many brave and good men in the churches and outside the churches today, men of true prophetic spirit who are thoroughly imbued with this new-old spirit and are leading mankind toward the light. (We in the Liberal Catholic Church, feel that we are making an appeal to all those who so sense this "new-old spirit" which the world has always sought conscious or not. All those who believe in the religion of the Spirit have always recognized one another as brothers. Ed.)

The social movement which is constantly taking place in every country of the world toward universal peace and brotherhood and a better and fairer distribution of wealth is really the same movement as that which is taking place in the world religions. This must be realized, (note the ecumenical movements everywhere! Ed.) social order based on man's spiritual unfoldment. No social system will permanently save and lift mankind without definitely recognized spiritual basis, that is, it must be a moral and spiritual movement, the recognition that we are the builders toward a great religious and ethical awakening the ultimate results of which no man can completely foresee!

And also the "Religion" of Science. It is the denial that there is, or ever has been, or ever can be, any dissonance between science and religion; it is the recognition that upon the foundations laid by modern science a vaster and nobler fabric of faith is rising. Science is supplying the facts which are woven into the texture or religious experience.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

All religion begins in cosmic emotion. It is the recognition of an essential relationship between the human soul and the great whole of things of which it is the outcome and expression. The mysterious universe is always calling, and, in some form or other, we are always answering. The artist answers by trying to express his feeling of its beauty; the scientist answers by recognizing its laws and unfolding its wonders; the social reformer answers by his self-denying labours for the common good. In each and every case there is in the background of experience a conviction that the unit is the instrument of the All; religion is implied in these as in all other activities in which man aims at a higher-than-self. But religion, properly so-called, begins when the soul consciously enters upon communion with this higher-than-self as with an all-comprehending intelligence; it is the soul instinctively turning toward its source and goal. Religion may assume a great many different and even repellent forms, but at bottom, this is what it always is: it is the soul reaching forth to the great mysterious whole of things, the higher-than-self, and seeking for closer and ever closer communion therewith. The savage with his totem and the Christian saint before the altar have this in common: They are reaching through the things that are seen to the reality beyond.

What the Word "God" Means.--But what name are we to give to this higher-than-self whose presence is so unescapably? The name matters comparatively little, but it includes all that the ordinary Christian means by God. The word "God" stands for many things, but to present-day thought it must stand for the uncaused Cause of all existence, the unitary principle implied in all multiplicity. Everyone of necessity believes in this. It is impossible to define the term completely, for to define is necessary to limit, and we are thinking of the illimitable. But we ought to understand clearly that to disbelieve in God is an impossibility; everyone believes in God if he believes in his own existence. The blanket materialist that ever lived, whoever he may have been, must have affirmed God even in the act of denying Him. So far, science has only succeeded in giving us a vaster, grander conception of the universe in which we live. When we say God, we mean the mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe, and which is present in every tiniest atom of the wondrous whole.

"Oh hidden Life vibrant in every Atom - O hidden Light shining in every creature - Oh hidden Love embracing all in Oneness, may each who feels himself as one with Thee, know he is therefore one with every other." ¹

We find that this Power is the one reality we cannot get away from, for, whatever else it may be, it is ourselves. Holding this view, theologians will tell us that we have taken a prodigious leap in saying this. How can there be anything in the universe outside of God? Whatever distinctions of being there may be within the universe it is surely clear that they must all be transcended and comprehended within infinity. There cannot be two infinities, nor there an infinite and also a finite beyond it. What infinity may be we have no means of knowing?

Here the most devout Christian is just as much of an agnostic as Professor Huxley; we can predicate nothing with confidence concerning the all-comprehending unity wherein we live and move and have our being, save and except as we see it manifested in that part of our universe which lies open to us. One would think that this were so obvious as to need no demonstration. But how do ordinary church-going Christians talk about God? They talk as though He were (practically) a finite being stationed somewhere above and beyond the universe, watching and worrying over other and lesser finite beings, to wit, ourselves. According to the received

¹ Annie Besant

phraseology, this God is greatly bothered and thwarted by what men have been doing throughout the few millenniums of human existence. He takes the whole thing seriously, and thinks about little else than getting wayward humanity into line again. To this end, He has adopted various expedients, the chief of which was the sending of His only begotten Son to suffer and die in order that He might be free to forgive the trouble we had caused Him. We are not making light of a sacred subject; it never was more seriously meant.

What we are trying to show is that, reduced to its simplest terms, the accepted theology of the churches still is pitifully inadequate as an explanation of our relationship to this great and mysterious universe. Either that or the subject has been over-simplified in order to explain to as many as possible. There is a beautiful spiritual truth underneath every venerable article of the Christian faith, but as popularly presented, this truth has become so distorted as to be falsehood. It narrows religion and belittles God. It is dishonouring to human nature, and is absolutely ludicrous as an interpretation of the comic process. Of course, the dogmatic theologian will maintain that this is a caricature of the way in which the relationship of God to the world is set forth in religious treatises and from the Christian pulpit. But is it?

We can appeal with confidence to the thoughtful man who has given up going to church as to whether it is or not. The image of God is naturally a very personal thing. Too many a Being outside Himself. It is reasonable to expect that he frequently asks "Why" this should or that happens to me and why is it that the poor crippled child who has been maimed by a falling rock.

I shall have something to say presently about the twin problems of pain and evil; but what so-called orthodoxy has to say is not only no solution of them, it is demonstrably false.

EVERY MAN BELIEVES IN GOD

For the moment, what we want to make clear is this: No man should refuse to assert his belief in the God because he cannot bring himself to believe in the God of the typical theologian. Remember that the real God is the God expressed in the universe and in yourself. And how much you can believe about him. You may think (with Haeckel) that the universe is the outcome of the fortuitous interaction of material forces without consciousness and definite purpose behind them, or you may believe that the cosmos is the product of intelligence and "means intensely and means good", but you cannot help believing in God, the Power revealed in it. Materialists may tell us that the universe does not know what it is doing, that is goes on clanking and banging, age after age, without end or aim. When I look at Him I say to myself, God is That, and, if I can only get down to the truth about myself, I shall find I am That too.

What does the Universe mean?--But why is there a universe at all? Why has the unlimited become limited? What was the need for the long cosmic struggle, the ignorance and pain, the apparently prodigal waste of life and beauty? Why does a perfect form appear only to be shattered and superseded by another? What can it all mean, if indeed it has a meaning? This is what thinkers have been asking themselves since thought began, and we have really nothing new to say about it. What we may have to say leads back through Hegelianism to the old Greek thinkers and beyond them again to the wise men who lived and taught in the East ages before Jesus was born. It is that this finite universe of ours is one means of the self-realization of the infinite. Supposing God to be the infinite, consciousness, there are still possibilities to that consciousness which it can only know as it becomes limited.

Any of my readers to whom this thought is unfamiliar have only to look at their own experience in order to see how reasonable it is. You may know yourself to be a brave man, but you will know it in a higher way if you are a soldier facing the cannon's mouth; you will know it in a still different way if you have to face the hostility and prejudice of a whole community for standing by something which you believe to be right. Perhaps you have a manly little son; he, like you, may believe in his sterling good qualities. But wait till he has gone out to fight his way in

life; then you will realize what he is worth, and so will he. It is one thing to know that you are a lover of truth; it is another thing to realize it when your immediate interest and your immediate safety would bid you hedge and lie. Do not these facts of human nature and experience tell us something about God? To all eternity God is what He is and never can be other, but it will take Him to all eternity to live out all that He is. In order to manifest even to Himself the possibilities of His being God must limit that being. There is no other way in which the fullest self-realization can be attained. Thus, we get two modes of God, - the infinite, perfect, unconditioned, primordial being, and the finite, imperfect, conditioned, and limited being of which we are ourselves expressions. And yet, these two are one, and the former is the guarantee that the latter shall not fail in the purpose for which is become limited. Thus to the question, Why a finite universe? We should answer; Because God wants to express what He is. His achievement here is only one of an infinite number of possibilities.

"God is the perfect poet who in creation acts His own conceptions."

This is an end worthy alike of God and man. The act of creation is eternal, although the cosmos is changing every moment, for God is ceaselessly uttering Himself through higher and ever higher forms of existence. We are helping Him to do it when we are true to ourselves; or rather, which is the same thing, He is doing it in us: "The Father abiding in me doeth His works." No part of the universe has value in and for itself alone; it has value only as it expresses God. To see one form break up and another take its place is no calamity, however terrible it may seem, for it only means that the life contained in that form has gone back to the universal life, and will express itself again in some higher and better form.

To think God in this way is an inspiration and a help in the doing of the humblest tasks. It redeems life from the dominion of the sordid and commonplace. It supplies an incentive to endeavour, and fills the heart with hope and confidence. To put it in homely, everyday phraseology, God is getting at something and we must help Him. We must be His eyes and hands and feet; we must be laborers together with Him.

This fits in with what science has to say about the very constitution of the universe; it is all of a piece; there are no gaps anywhere. It is a divine experiment without risk of failure, and we must interpret it in terms of our own highest.

MAN IN RELATION TO GOD

WHAT IS MAN?

So far we have seen that the universe, including ourselves, is the instrument or vehicle of the self-expression of God. God is All; He is the universe and infinitely more, but it is only as we read Him in the universe that we can know anything about Him. We have seen, too, that it is by means of the universe and His self-limitation therein that he expresses Himself to Himself. Now what is our relation to this process? What are we to think about ourselves? Who or what are we?

A witty Frenchman once sardonically remarked, "In the beginning God created man in His own image, and man has ever since been returning the compliment by creating God in his". But what else can we do? It follows from what has already been said that we know nothing and can know nothing of God except as we read Him in the universe, and we can only interpret the universe in terms of our own consciousness. In other words, man is a microcosm of the universe. What the universe may be in reality we do not know, - though I am not so sure as some people seem to be that appearance and reality do not correspond, - we can only know it in so far as it produces sense images on our brain and enters into our individual consciousness.

We can only think of existence in terms of consciousness; nothing exists except in and for mind. The mind that thinks the universe must be immeasurably greater than our own, but in so far as we too are able to think the universe, ours is one with it. All thinking starts with a paradox, even the famous saying of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am"; and our individual paradox seems at least as reasonable as any other, and has fewer difficulties to encounter than most. We start then with the assumption that the universe is God's thought about Himself, and that in so far as we are able to think it along with Him, we can say: "I and my Father are one".

It cannot be demonstrated beyond dispute that any two human beings think the same in the universe. Strictly speaking, it is certain that they do not in every detail. But the common denominator of our experience, intellectual, moral, and spiritual is the assumption that in the main the universe is pretty much the same for one man as it is for another. When we speak of the rolling sea, our neighbour does not understand us to mean the waving trees, but we cannot prove that he does not. If he is consistent in seeing water as trees and trees as water, his mind must be constituted differently from mine and yet we may never know it. So, by an almost unperceived act of faith, we have to take for granted that our separate individualities meet and become one to some extent in our common experience of this great universe, which is at the same time the expression of God.

The real universe must be infinitely greater and more complex than the one which is apparent to our physical senses. This becomes probable, even on material grounds, the moment we begin to examine into the nature of sense perception. The ear is constituted to hear just so many sounds; beyond that limit at either end of the scale we can hear nothing, but that does not prove that there are no more sounds to hear. Similarly, the eye can distinguish three colours of the rainbow and their various combinations; beyond that limit we are colour-blind. But suppose we were endowed to hear and see sounds and colours a million times greater in number *than* those of which we have at present any cognizance! What kind of a universe would it be then? But that universe exists now; it is around and within us; it is God's thought about Himself, infinite and eternal. It is only finite to a finite mind, and it is more than probable that spiritual beings exist with a range of consciousness far greater than our own, to whom the universe of which we form a part must seem far more beautiful and fuller of meaning than it seems to us. Imagine a man who could only see grey hues and could only hear a note A on the keyboard. His experience would be quite as real as ours, and indeed the same up to a point, but how little he would know of the world as we know it.

The glory of the sunset sky would be hidden from him; for him the melting power of the human voice, or of a grand cathedral organ, would not exist. So, no doubt, it is in a different degree with us all. The so-called material world is our consciousness of reality exercising itself along a strictly limited plane. We can know just as much as we are constituted to know, and no more. But it is all a question of consciousness. The larger and fuller a consciousness becomes, the more it can grasp and hold of the consciousness of God, the fundamental reality of our being as of everything else.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

The science of psychology and parapsychology has begun to throw an amount of valuable light upon the mystery of human personality. As the result of numerous experiments and investigations into the normal and abnormal working of the human mind, psychologists have discovered that a great deal of our ordinary mental action goes on without our being aware of it. This unconscious cerebration, as it is called, can hardly be seriously disputed, for every new addition to our psychological knowledge goes to confirm it.

Hence, we are hearing a great deal about the subconscious mind. Now that our attention has been directed to it, we are coming to see, as is usual with every new discovery, that after a fashion, we knew it all along. The subconscious mind seems to be the seat of inspiration and intuition. Poets, preachers, and musicians can bear testimony of a somewhat similar kind. The thoughts which are most reliable are those which come unbidden, rising to the surface of consciousness from unknown depths. The best scientific discoveries are made in much the same way; the investigator has an intuition and forthwith sets to work to justify it. Reason, by which we ordinarily mean the conscious exercise of the mental faculties, plods along as if on four feet; intuition soars on wings. Truly astonishing things are frequently done by the subconscious mind superseding and con-trolling the conscious mind in exceptional states of emotion, especially in the case of people who are not quite normal; but there is no one, however, stolid and commonplace, who does not owe far more to his subliminal consciousness than he does to what he calls his reason; indeed reason has comparatively little to do with the way in which people ordinarily conduct themselves, although we may like to think otherwise.

THE HIGHER SELF

Several important inferences follow from this position. The first is that our surface consciousness is somewhat illusory and does not possess the sharpness and definiteness of outline which we are accustomed to take for granted when thinking of ourselves. Our true being is vastly greater than we know, and vastly greater than the world will ever know. It belongs not to the material plane of existence, but to the plane of eternal reality. This larger self is a perfect and eternal spiritual being integral to the being of God. Our surface self, the Philistine self, is the incarnation of some portion of that true eternal self which is one with God. The dividing line between the surface self and the other self is not the definite demarcation it appears to be. To the higher self it does not exist. To us it must seem to all intents and purposes the two selves in a man are two separate beings, but that is not so; they are one, although the lower, owing to its limitations, cannot realize the fact. We are greater than we seem, that we have a higher self, and that our limited consciousness does not involve a separate individuality.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

The great poets are the best theologians after all, for they see the farthest. The true being is consciousness; the universe, visible and invisible, is consciousness. The higher self of the individual man unfolds more of the consciousness of God than the lower, but lower and higher are the same thing. They are like two sides of one and the same coin. This may be a difficult thought to grasp, but the time is rapidly approaching when it will be more generally accepted.

THE UNITY OF HUMANITY

Another inference from the theory of the subconscious mind is that of the fundamental unity of the whole human race. Indeed all life is fundamentally one, but there is a kinship of man with man which precedes that of man with any other order of being. Here again, the spiritual truth cuts across what seem to be the dictates of common sense. Common sense assumes that I and Thou are eternally distinct, and that by no possibility can the territories of our respective beings ever become one. But even now, and on mere everyday grounds, we are finding reason to think otherwise. You are about to make an observation at table and some member of your family makes it before you; you are thinking of a certain tune and someone begins to hum it; you have a certain purpose in mind and, lo, that same thought finds expression in someone else, despite all probabilities. Oh, you may remark, this is only thought transference. Precisely, but what are you except your thought? All being, remember, is conscious of being. The infinite consciousness sees the same whole in part.

Ultimately, your being and mine are one and we shall come to know it. Individuality only has meaning in relation to the whole, and individual consciousness can only be fulfilled by expanding until it embraces the whole. Nothing that exists in your consciousness now and constitutes your self-knowledge will ever be obliterated or ever can be, but in a higher state of existence you will realise it to be a part of the universal stock. I shall not cease to be I, nor you to be you; but there must be a region of experience where we shall find that you and I are one.

THE SELF IS GOD

A third inference, already hinted at that has gone before, is that the highest of all selves, the ultimate Self of the universe, is God. The New Testament speaks of man as body, soul, and spirit. The body is the thought-form through which the individuality finds expression on our present limited plane; the soul is a man's consciousness of himself as apart from all the rest of existence and even from God — it is the bay seeing itself as the bay and not as the ocean; the spirit is the true being thus limited and expressed—it is the deathless divine within us. The soul therefore, is what we make it; the spirit we can neither make nor mar, for it is at once our being and God's. What we are here to do is to grow the soul, that is to manifest the true nature of the spirit, to build up that self-realization which is God's objective with the universe as a whole and with every self-conscious unit in particular.

Where, then, someone will say, is the dividing line between our being and God's? There is no dividing line except from our side. The ocean of consciousness knows that the bay has never been separate from itself, although the bay is only conscious of the ocean on the outer side of its own being. But, the reader may protest, this is Pantheism. No. It is not. Pantheism is a technical term in philosophic parlance and means something quite different from this. It stands for a Fate-God, a God imprisoned in His universe, a God who cannot help Himself and does not even know what He is about, a blind force which here breaks out into a rock and there into Ruskin and is equally indifferent to either. God is my deeper Self and yours too; He is the Self of the universe and knows all about it. He is never baffled and cannot be baffled; the whole cosmic process is

one long incarnation and uprising of the being of God from itself to itself. With Tennyson, you can call this doctrine the Higher Pantheism if you like, but it is the very antithesis of the Pantheism which has played such a part in the history of thought.

ITS RELATION TO FREE WILL

But then, another will remonstrate; it does away with the freedom of the will. Well, here is a slippery subject sure enough, and one upon which more nonsense has been talked probably than any other within the range of philosophical or theological discussion. Have we anything new to say about it? Probably not, but we think we can focus the issue and show what we must recognize in order to have a rational grasp of the subject. Thinkers have talked too much in the past about the separate faculties of human nature as though they could be divided into Reason, Feeling, Action, and so on. But they are beginning to talk differently now. They are coming to see that a human being cannot be cut up like that. The Reason is the whole man thinking, judging, comparing. Feeling accompanies Reason and is never found apart from it, for reason implies consciousness, and without consciousness, nothing that can properly be called feeling exists. The will is simply the whole man acting.

No argument will convince us that we have not some power of individual self-direction and self-control. The most thoroughgoing determinist that ever lived forgets his determinism even while he argues about it. It must be amusing even to himself to see how he enjoys scoring off his opponent, thus taking for granted in the heat of controversy the very freedom he sets out to deny. The assumption at the bottom of every fibrous argument is that the other party might have held other views than those assailed. The position of the determinist in effect is this: You must believe you have no freedom to choose anything; otherwise you are to blame for choosing wrongly. Of course, the consistent determinist would evade this reductio ad absurdum by saying that he is as much necessitated in blaming his opponent for holding wrong views as the opponent is for refusing to give them up. Here, we show that by the very constitution of our minds, we cannot avoid taking some measure of free will for granted. Even the determinist who scouts this view and calls it absurd is by his own action a convincing demonstration of its truth.

ONLY THE INFINITE HAS PERFECT FREEDOM

There is no such thing as perfect freedom in a finite being. Perfect freedom belongs only to infinity; finiteness implies limitations. Popular theology usually assumes, or appears to assume, that every individual is a perfectly free agent able at all times to distinguish and to choose between the higher and the lower, and as liable to choose the one as the other. There is another kind of theologizing, of course, which speaks of the weakened or corrupted will due to our fallen nature. There is not, and never has been, an act of the will in which a man, without bias in either direction, has deliberately chosen evil in the presence of good. Under such circumstances no being in his sober senses would ever choose evil; enlightened self-interest alone would forbid the possibility of such a choice. Freedom of the will in this sense has never existed. The only freedom we possess is like that of a bird in a cage; we can choose between the higher and the lower standing ground, a choice called for by the very fact that we are in prison, but we cannot choose where the cage shall go.

Some people who think themselves orthodox, will object to being told that every man has a higher self than that of which he is immediately conscious; that fundamentally the individual is one with the whole race and with God; that no one possesses absolute free will. To them, it may seem an absurdity to maintain these positions. But if they say so, they will convict themselves of absurdity for, with the exception of the last, Christian doctrine already affirms them all of Jesus. According to the received theology, Jesus was God, and yet He did not possess the all-controlling

consciousness of the universe. He was also man, and yet He was before all ages. All creation proceeds from and centres in Him, and yet, He was able to limit Himself in such a degree as to be ignorant of much that was going on in His own universe. If so-called orthodoxy finds it no difficulty to assert these things as being true of Jesus, it will not find it easy to show good reason why the same should not be true of all humanity. For the moment, we neither assert nor deny the uniqueness of Jesus. All we are concerned to show is that if it is not intellectually impossible to affirm certain things about the consciousness of Jesus and the limitation of His true being in His earthly life, it is not impossible to affirm them of mankind.

It can be shown that its pedigree is considerably longer than that. It is explicitly stated in the fourth gospel: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Those who object to our statement of the fundamental identity of God and man will have to explain away such passages as this, and there are plenty of them. But, it may be urged, this is meant to apply only to Jesus. That we do not believe; we think the exceedingly able writer of the fourth gospel knew better, but for the moment, we will not contest the point. Granted that it does apply only to Jesus, what then? The very things which the critics declare to be impossible of personality in general in relation of God, they are affirming already of at least one personality, that of Jesus. If Jesus was God and yet prayed to God, if His consciousness was finite and yet one with the infinite, it is clear that in this one instance the seemingly impossible was not impossible.

Those who insist upon the fundamental distinction between human personality and the being of God are thus on the horns of a dilemma. Present-day orthodoxy cannot consistently attack this position. The only telling criticism that can be directed against it is that which proceeds from the side of scientific monism. A thorough-going monist might reasonably contend that up to a certain point we have been arguing for a monistic view of the universe, in company with practically the whole scientific world, and have then given the case away by admitting a certain amount of individual freedom. It is well known that the needle of a compass does not always point steadily and consistently to the pole; its tiny aberrations have to be taken into account. But these are no real hindrance to the sailing of the ship, and the compass itself cannot run away.

Humanity is a "Being of one substance with the Father," our consciousness of that being is our own. There is no substance without consciousness. What other kind of substance can there be? Therefore, when our finite consciousness ceases to be finite, there will be no distinction between ours and God's. The distinction between finite and infinite is not eternal. The being of God is a complex unity, containing within itself and harmonizing every form of self-consciousness that can possibly exist. No one need be afraid that in believing this he is assenting to the final obliteration of his own personality; if such obliteration were possible, our present personality could possess no permanent value even for God. No form of self-consciousness can ever perish. It completes itself in becoming infinite.

THE NATURE OF EVIL

THE PROBLEM NOT INSOLUBLE

Before going on to say more about human personality (especially the personality of Jesus), it is requisite that we should determine our attitude toward a great question which in manifold forms has beset the human intellect ever since the dawn of history, namely, the problem of evil.

Evil is a negative, not a positive term. It denotes the absence rather than the presence of something. It is the perceived privation of good, the shadow where the light ought to be. "The devil is a vacuum," as a friend once remarked. Evil is not an intruder in an otherwise perfect universe; finiteness presumes it. A thing is only seen to be evil when the capacity for good is present and unsatisfied. Evil is not a principle at war with good. Good is being and evil is not-being. When consciousness of being seeks further expression and finds itself hindered by its limitations, it becomes aware of evil.

A little reflection ought to convince anyone that this is the true way to look at the question of evil. Instead of asking how evil came to be in the universe, we should recognize that nothing finite can exist without it. Infinity alone can know nothing of evil because its resources are illimitable and - if we may be permitted the expression - every need is supplied before it can be felt. Evil and good are not like two armies in deadly conflict with each other for the possession of the city of God. We ought not to say that when one is in, the other is out, but rather when one is the other is not. The very word "good" implies evil. One is positive and the other negative. Good only emerges in our experience in contrast with evil, and the ideal existence must be that in which good and evil are both transcended in the life eternal, when struggle and conflict are no more. In our present state of existence evil is necessary in order that we may know that there is such a thing as good, and therefore that we may realize the true nature of the life eternal. Look at that shadow on the pavement cast by the row of houses between your vision and the rising sun. Until the sun made his presence felt, you did not even know there was a shadow.

Presently as the light giver climbs beyond and above this temporary barrier you will watch the shadow shrink and disappear. Where has it gone? If it were an entity in itself, it would have moved off somewhere else, but you are well aware that it has not done so, for it never had any real existence; real as it seemed, so real that you were able to give it a name, it never did more than show the place that needed to be filled with light. When the light came the shadow was swallowed up. So it is with every kind of evil, no matter what. Your perception of evil is the concomitance of your expanding finite consciousness of good. The moment you see a think to be wrong you have affirmed that you know, however vaguely, what is required to put it right? Even when evil comes in the form of a calamity that lessens and diminishes your previous experience of good, as in an earthquake or a pestilence, this statement as to its true nature is in no way invalidated. It is not a thing in itself, it is only the perceived privation of what you know to be good, and which you know to be good because of the very presence of limitation, hindrance, and imperfection.

THE RELATION OF EVIL AND PAIN

But to most mind evil is almost synonymous with pain, at any rate in our experience it is associated with pain. When men begin questioning the goodness of God because of the evil of the world, they usually mean the pain of the world. Perhaps their thought about sin is to some extent an exception; sin and pain are not necessarily immediately associated in the theological

mind. But what is pain? Properly speaking it is not in itself evil, but rather the evidence of evil, and also in a different way the evidence of good. Pain is life asserting itself against death, the higher struggling with the lower, the true with the false, and the real with the unreal. When a baby cries for food he does so in unconscious obedience to law of life; a stone does not cry for food. When a strong man suffers in the grip of a fell disease, the life within him is fighting for expression against something that seems to be extinguishing it. The suffering is caused by the effort of the life to retain its hold on the form, and yet if the disease succeeds in breaking the form it has only released the life to find expression in some higher form. When a guilty man suffers the tortures of remorse, it means that the truth within him is declaring itself against the falsehood, although it does not follow that it will immediately conquer. This is what pain is: it is life pressing upon death, and death resisting life. If a traveller falls asleep in the snow, or a sailor is nearly drowned, the process of recovery is always painful because the returning life has to overcome death.

Carry the same principle through the whole range of human experience, physical, mental, and moral, and it will indicate the real significance of all the pain which has ever been endured or ever will be endured by mankind.

Still this would not satisfy everyone who feels compassion for cosmic suffering. In Huxley's words - "There is no sadder story than the story of sentient life upon this planet, and in so saying he has the testimony of modern science behind him."

We seem to be more sensitive to the presence of pain as well as more sympathetic than our fathers were, and this tendency shows itself in a recognition of the solidarity of humanity with the lower creation. Theology has had practically nothing to say about the suffering or even about the significance of the myriad forms of life which exist below the human scale. But why ought they to be ignored? Indeed, how can they be ignored? The theology that has nothing to say about our clever and loyal four-footed companions, with their magnanimity sensitive spirit, and even their moral qualities, omits something of considerable importance to a thorough and consistent world-view. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father," said one who spake as never man spake. As Liberal Catholics we should find no difficulty in recognizing the importance of the brute creation, for it believes in a practical recognition of the solidarity of all existence. There is no life that is not of God, and therefore no Life can ever perish, whatever may become of the form. If we can explain human suffering, the same explanation covers the suffering of all sub-human life.

THE TRUE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

But the problem is not so large as it looks. When we hear of a terrible event, we are apt to jump to the conclusion that the amount of suffering in the world is specially and enormously greater because of it. But that is not so. Our standard of measurement is a false one. The amount of pain endured depends upon the consciousness enduring it and upon its capacity for looking before and after. Besides we only suffer individually, and therefore all the pain of the world is comprised within the experience of the being who suffers most, whoever that may be. We ought to estimate the actual amount of cosmic suffering by the intensity of the suffering borne by any one individual at any one time. We are not immediately conscious of all the woe of the universe; we are each of us conscious of our own, even though it may be caused by sympathy with others; and the world's woe taken as a whole is not greater than the amount borne by him whose consciousness of it is greatest. This is what we may call the intensive as contrasted with the extensive observation of the problem of pain. It is a kind of barometrical measurement. We do not gauge the weather by adding together the figures of all the storm-glasses in the world; the rise or fall of the mercury in any one of them, especially the best one among them, comprehends the whole. Here is the problem of pain in a nutshell. The whole

appalling tale of cosmic suffering can be compressed within the limits of the individual consciousness which has endured the most.

THE PURPOSE OF PAIN

Nor is there the slightest need to be afraid of it. Theologians may tell us that we should never have known anything about it but for man's first disobedience, and humanists may maintain that it is impossible to reconcile it with belief in the goodness of God; but they are both wrong. There are some things impossible even to omnipotence, and one of them is the realization of a love which has never known pain. If creation is the self-expression of God, pain is inevitable from the first. For what is the nature of God? According to the Christian religion it is love. And what is love? Here is another slippery word which has had some contradictory connotations in the course of its history.

Love is life, the life eternal, the life of God. Our Lord used both terms as expressive of the innermost of God. The life of God is such that in the presence of need it must give itself just as water will run down hill; this is the law of its being. Where no need exists, that is, where life is infinite, love finds no expression. To realize itself for what it is, sacrifice, that is self-limitation, becomes necessary. Love is essentially self-giving. It is the living of the individual life in terms of the whole. In a finite world this cannot but mean pain, but it is also self-fulfilment. "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life shall find it." This profound saying of Jesus is older even than Jesus; it is the law of love, the means to the realization of the life eternal. It is so plain and simple, and withal so sublime, that we cannot but see it to be true, and can do no other than bow before it.

The law of the universe is the law of sacrifice in order to self-manifestation. In this age-long process all sentient life has its part, for it is of the infinite, and to the infinite it will return. When, therefore, you feel compassion for the rabbit which is being killed by the weasel, or the stag that falls before the hounds, you can remember at the same time that this is not meaningless cruelty, but the operation of the same law that governs the highest activities of your own soul. You are right to feel the compassion; you were meant to feel it; and there is good reason why you should, for the suffering is real enough to awaken it. But do not forget that the suffering is not quite what it appears to you; it is only yours as it enters into your own consciousness and you suffer along with the actual victim. Compassion in such a case is the initial impulse toward self-offering, the desire to take the victim's place. But the suffering of the rabbit or the stag is to be measured by the consciousness of the rabbit or the stag, not by yours. In the slaughter nothing perishes but the form, the life returns to the Soul of the universe.

THE NATURE OF SIN

What, then, is sin? In the light of the foregoing considerations that question should not be difficult to answer. Sin is the opposite of love. All possible activities of the soul are between two poles, self on the one hand and the common life on the other. Everything we can think or say or do is in one or other of these directions; we are either living for the self at the expense of the whole, or we are fulfilling the self by serving the whole. Sin is therefore selfishness.

If the true life is the life which is lived in terms of the whole, then the sinful life is the life which is lived for self alone. No man, however depraved, succeeds in living the selfish life all the time; if he did he would sink below the level of the brutes. Sin makes for death; love makes for life. Sin is self-ward; love is All-ward. Sin is always a blunder; in the long run it becomes its own punishment, for it is the soul imposing fetters upon itself, which fetters must be broken by the reassertion of the universal life. Sin is actually a quest for life, but a quest which is pursued in the wrong way. The man who is living a selfish life must think, if he thinks about it at all, that he can gratify himself in that way, that is, he can get more abundant life. But in this he is mistaken; he is trying to cut himself off from the source of life. He is like a man seated on the branch of a tree

and sawing it off from the trunk. But when theologians talk of the wrath of God against sin, and the wrong which sin has inflicted upon God, they employ figures of speech which are distinctly misleading. In fact, they do not seem to have a clear idea as to what sin really is. They use vague language about it as though it were some kind of corporate offence against God of which the whole race has been guilty without being able to help it, and which no individual can escape although he is as much to blame as if he could. But sin has never injured God except through man. It is the God within who is injured by it rather than the God without.

It is time we had done with the unreal language about the Judge on the great white throne, whose justice must be satisfied before His mercy can operate. The figure contains a truth which everyone knows well enough, but it is not easy to recognize it under this form.

THE FALL

The theological muddle is largely caused by the inability of many people to free themselves from archaic notions which have really nothing to do with Christianity, although they have been imported into it. The principal of these, in relation to the question of sin, is the doctrine of the Fall. This doctrine has played a mischievous part in Christian thought, more especially perhaps since the Reformation. In broad outline it is as follows: Man was created originally innocent and pure, - for what reason is not quite clear, but it is said to be for the glory of God, - but by an act of disobedience to a divine command he fell from his high estate and in his fall dragged down the whole creation and blighted posterity.

Things have been wrong ever since, and God has been angry not only with the original transgressor but with all his descendants. God is a God of righteousness and therefore in a future world He will torture every human being who dies without availing himself of a certain "plan of salvation" designed to give him a chance of escape. This is a queer sort of righteousness! The plan of salvation consists in sending His own Son - a Son who has existed eternally, which the rest of us have not - to live a few years on earth and go through a certain program ending with a violent death. In consideration of this death, God undertakes to forgive His erring children, who could not help being sinners, and yet are just as much to blame as if they could, but only on consideration that they "believe" in time to flee from the wrath to come. If they happen to die half a minute too late, repentance will be of no avail.

Theological writers go on using language which implies this theory and so do preachers of the gospel. We do not mean that they are dishonest, but they cannot get their perspective right. They think that by giving up belief in a historical fall of the race they would have to give up a great deal more. Without the Fall they do not know what to say about sin, salvation, the Atonement, etc. They are mistaken in this supposition. It is in our view absolutely impossible for any intelligent man to continue to believe in the Fall as it is literally understood and taught.

THE GENESIS ACCOUNT

It is popularly supposed that the doctrine is derived from the book of Genesis, but that is hardly the case. No doubt the Genesis myth about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden forms the background of it, but it is not consonant with the doctrine itself. The Genesis narrative says nothing about the ruined creation or the curse upon posterity. There is no hint of individual immortality, much less of heaven and hell; no Christ, no cross, no future judgment, no vicarious Atonement. It is a composite primitive story. A careful examination of its constituents will show that more than one account of the event has been drawn upon to supply materials for the narrative as it now stands. The legend was in existence as oral tradition ages before it became literature. How old it may be we have no means of knowing with certainty, but the parallel stories in other religions are of great antiquity and had originally no ethical significance whatever.

The Genesis story of the Fall exercised no influence upon Old Testament religion. It is scarcely alluded to in the best Old Testament writings, some of them earlier probably than the Genesis account itself. It was not until after the great captivity that it showed any tendency toward becoming an article of faith. At the time when Jesus was born, it had passed into the popular Jewish religion. There is a psychological reason for the gradual transformation of a primitive legend into a religious dogma. The Jewish nation has fallen upon evil days. For generations after the great captivity they had been ground under the heel of a succession of foreign masters. Under the cruel rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, about the middle of the second century B.C., their very religion seemed likely to be crushed out by merciless persecution.

It was no wonder that the serious minds of the day became inclined to look upon the present as being but the ruin of the past; the sorry remainder of what had once been an ideal world. This tendency showed itself in various ways, the chief of which was a looking back to the great days of David and Solomon as the period of Israel's brightest splendour and prosperity. Another way in which the same tendency showed itself was that of taking the legend of the Fall more or less literally. A suffering generation could hardly help thinking of their woes as being the result of some primitive act of transgression. This is the way in which the rabbis came to speak of the Fall as being an actual fact of religious and ethical importance.

A similar set of political and social conditions carried the doctrine over into Christianity, chiefly through the influence of the apostle Paul who had received a rabbinical training. Not only Hebrews but Greeks had begun to feel that the world was decaying and perhaps nearing the end. They idealized the past and contrasted it with the presents. All civilization lay under the dominion of Rome, and Rome herself was subject to a military dictator. The heart of the world-wide spire was a hotbed of corruption where every form of vice took root and nourished. The Greek thinkers and scholars despised their masters, but their own heroic days were gone and they were helpless to cast off the yoke. They had no Pericles now, no Leonidas, and no Miltiades. Gone were the men of Thermopylae, Marathon, and Salamis. These were lesser, darker days. With a sure instinct men were ceasing to feel any confidence in the future of this pagan civilization. It had its great elements, but the signs of disruption were already apparent and no one could foresee what would take its place.

The mood of the time is reflected in the pages of Tacitus and Juvenal. Into this atmosphere came Christianity with its doctrine of the holy love of God and its adoring faith in Jesus. But both Judaism and Hellenism had already the tendency to look back toward a better and happier time and to think of the present as a fall from it. Paul felt this like everyone else, and forthwith took some kind of a fall for granted when unfolding his system of thought. It is doubtful whether he took the Genesis story literally or not, and he certainly made Adam the type of the unideal or earthly man who had become estranged from God. He was too great a man to be pinned down to mere literalism in a question of this kind, so in his use of the terms supplied by the rabbinical version of the legend he glides easily into the statement of the obvious truth that the Adam, or lower man, or earthly principle in every human being, needs to be transformed by the uprising of the Christ or ideal man, within the soul. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive?"

"The first man is of the earth earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."

Here, then, we have the origins of the doctrine of the Fall. Right through Christian history the tendency has run to look upon the world as the ruins of a divine plan marred by man's perversity and self-will. It is time we got rid of it, for it has had a blighting, deadening influence upon hopeful endeavour for the good of humanity. It is not integral to Christianity, for Jesus never said a word about it and did not even allude to it indirectly. It implies a view of the nature and dealings of God with men which is unethical and untrue.

To be sure Milton did not believe it himself when he wrote:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree.

But his Puritan associates and Catholic ancestors did, and orthodoxy professes to do so still, though it does not know quite how to put it without falling into absurdity. Again, why should God feel Himself so much aggrieved by Adam's peccadillo? If it were not for the theological atmosphere which surrounds the question, we should see at once that it was ridiculous. Why should the consequences continue through countless generations? Remember this was supposed to be the very start of humanity's career. What a dreary, hopeless outlook was left to it! The notion is incredible, and most of the clear-headed men who hold it would scout it without discussion if they heard of it now for the first time. As it is, however, they go on talking of the "awful holiness" of God, the offense against the divine majesty, and so on. But holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, love, is but different expressions of the same spiritual reality. One might go on multiplying these considerations for ever, but there is no need to do so. Sufficient has been said to demonstrate the fact that the doctrine of the Fall is an absurdity from the point of view both of ethical consistency and common sense.

After this it is almost superfluous to point out that modern science knows nothing of it and can find no trace of such a cataclysm in human history. On the contrary, it asserts that there has been a gradual and unmistakable rise; the law of evolution governs human affairs just as it does every other part of the cosmic process. This statement is quite consistent with the admission that there have been periods of retrogression as well as of advance, and that the advance itself has not been steady and uniform from first to last; there have been long stretches of history during which humanity has seemed to mark time and then a sudden outburst of intellectual activity and moral achievement. It could hardly be maintained, for instance, that the Athens of Socrates was not superior to the France of Fulk the black of Anjou, or that the Assyria of Asshur-bani-pal was not quite as civilized as the Germany of the ninth century A.D. There are some people who maintain that while the material advance is unquestionable, the intellectual advance is on the whole more doubtful, and that, morally speaking, human nature is no different from what it ever was. Intellectually, the average man may still be inferior to Plato, - though even Plato did not understand the need for exact thought as modern philosophers do, - but civilization as a whole has produced a higher level of intellectual attainment than had been reached by Plato's world. A civilization in which four-fifths of the people were helots kept in ignorance in order that an aristocratic few might enjoy the benefits of culture was not equal to ours, great and glaring as the defects of ours may be. Again, while it is only too sadly true that modern civilization contains plenty of callous selfishness, gross injustice, and abominable cruelty, it can hardly be denied that these relics of our brute ancestry are universally deplored, and that society recognizes them to be inimical to its well-being and seeks to get rid of them. Thank God that bad as men are today they are not as men were in the days of the Caesars.

Should such ideas have arisen a few hundred years ago, theological disputants would not have wasted time in writing newspaper articles; they would have met in solemn conclave and condemned the heretic. Of course it is remotely possible that some of them would like to do it now, but public opinion would not let them; things have changed, and the change is in the direction of a higher general morality. If any man feels pessimistic about the present, let him study the past and he will feel reassured. A sensitivity they call sentimentalism is greater sensibility, greater sympathy, a keener sense of justice. What is the moral ideal but love? Every advance in the direction of universal love and brotherhood is a moral advance. The sternness of Stoicism or Puritanism was an imperfect morality. The grandeur and impressiveness of it were

due to the fact that Stoics and Puritans for the most part took their ideal seriously; they aimed at something high and dedicated their lives to it. This dedication of the life to something higher than self-interest is of the very essence of true morality, and its highest reach is perfect love. We are a long way from that yet, although the ideal was manifested two thousand years ago. The average man today is certainly not nobler than the apostle Paul, nor does he see more deeply into the true meaning of life than did John the divine, but the general level is higher. Slowly, very slowly, with every now and then a depressing set-back, the race is climbing the steep ascent toward the ideal of universal brotherhood.

It is sometimes maintained by thinkers who account themselves progressive that the law of evolution holds good of mankind so far as our physical constitution is concerned, but that a special act of creation took place as soon as the physical frame was sufficiently developed to become the receptacle of a higher principle, and that then, and not till then, "man became a living soul".

But is impossible to square the circle in this way, and to contrive to get the doctrine of the Fall in by the back door, so to speak. The idea in the minds those who hold this view appears to be that the tenant of the body which has been so long in preparation was a simple but intelligent and morally innocent personality who forthwith proceeded to do all that Adam is credited with and therefore spoiled what would otherwise have been a harmonious and orderly development; what we now see is not evolution as God meant it, but evolution perverted by human wrong-headedness. But this theory contains more difficulties than the older one it aims to replace. It makes God even more incompetent than the traditional view does. For untold ages, apparently, He has been preparing the world for the advent of humanity, only to find that the moment humanity enters it, the whole scheme is spoiled. But we need not seriously consider this view; the facts are overwhelmingly against it. The history, even of the most recent civilizations, is, comparatively speaking, only as old as yesterday, whereas the presence of human life on this planet is traceable into the almost illimitable past. But the farther we go back in our investigation of human origins the less possible does it appear that the primitive man of theological tradition has ever existed. The Adam of the dogmatic theologian is like the economic man of the older school of writers on political science, the man who always wants to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, and whose one consistent endeavour is to seek pleasure and avoid pain; he has never existed.

DEVINE IMMANENCE AND ITS FALL

Besides, we do not want him to exist. The Fall theory is not only impossible in face of the findings of modern science; it is a real hindrance to religion. So far from having to give it up because science would have nothing to say to it, the difficulty would be to retain it and yet have anything like a rational view of the relation of God and the world. It has already been stated that the starting-point is the recognition of the truth that God is expressing Himself through His world.

This truth occupied a place in religious thought ages before modern science was thought of; science has confirmed it, but has not compelled us to think it; if science had never existed, it would still remain the only reasonable ground for an adequate explanation of the relation of man to the universe. It simplifies all our questionings and coordinates all our activities. There is not a single one in the whole vast range of human interests which it does not cover. There is nothing which humanity can do or seek to do which is not immediately dependent upon it. The grandest task and the lowliest are both implied in it. It declares the common basis of religion and morality. Religion is the response of human nature to the whole of things considered as an order; morality is the living and the individual life in such a way as to be and do the most for humanity as a whole; it is making the most of one's self for the sake of the whole. Morality is not

self-immolation. True morality involves the duty of self-formation and the exercise of judgment and self-discipline in order that the individual life may become as great a gift as possible to the common life. It will therefore be seen at once that there is a vital relation between morality and religion; the one implies the other even though the fact may not always be recognized, and both are based upon the immanence of God.

THE TRUTH BENEATH THE DOCTRINE OF THE FALL

But never yet has a particular doctrine or mode of stating truth held its own for any length of time in human history unless there was some genuine truth beneath it, and the doctrine of the Fall is no exception. It does contain a truth, a truth which can be stated in a few words, and which might be inferred from what has already been said about the relationship of man and God. The coming of a finite creation into being is itself of the nature of the fall, a coming down from perfection to Imperfection.

We have seen the reason for that coming down; it is that the universal life may realize its own nature by attenuating or limiting its perfection. If we want to understand the composition of the ordinary pure white ray, we take a prism and break it up into its constituents. This is just what God has been doing in creation. Our present consciousness of ourselves and of the world can reasonably be accounted a fall, for we came from the infinite and unto the infinite perfection we shall in the end return. This does not mean that our present consciousness of ourselves is eternal, but that our true being is eternally one with the being of God and that to be separated from a full knowledge of that truth is to have undergone a fall. But this fall has no sinister antecedents; its purpose is good, and there is nothing to mourn over except our own slowness at getting into line with the cosmic purpose. Another way of describing it would be to call it the incarnation of God in nature and man, a subject about which more will be said in another chapter. This view of the meaning and significance of the Fall can be traced in all great religious literature. Perhaps one of the best statements of it that has ever been made is the one set forth by Paul of Tarsus in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the son of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by the reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Passages like this make it impossible to believe that Paul was ever really tied down to the literal rabbinical view of Adam's transgression and its consequences; and these words are a clear statement of the truth that the imperfection of the finite Creation is not man's fault but God's will, and is a means toward a great end.

JESUS THE DIVINE MAN

All that has been said hitherto is but a preparation for the discussion of one of the greatest subjects that at present occupies the field of faith and morals, that of the personality of Jesus and His significance for mankind. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the ultimate question for the Christian religion is that of the place occupied by its Founder. Who or what was Jesus? How much can we really know about Him? What value does He possess for the religious consciousness today? All other questions about the Christian religion are of minor importance compared with these, and if we are prepared with an answer to these we have by implication answered all the rest. Christianity is in a special sense immediately dependent upon its Founder. Christianity draws its sustenance from the belief that Jesus is still alive and impacting Himself upon the world through His followers. Other great religions trace their origin to the teaching and example of some exceptional person; Christianity does the same, but with the added conviction that Jesus is as much in the world as ever and that His presence is realized in the mystic union between Himself and those who know and love Him. If this be true, it is a fact of the very highest importance and one which can neither be passed over nor relegated to a subordinate position. Christianity without the Christ is the world without the sun.

Before discussing what theology has to say of Him let us note in general terms what the civilized world is saying, theology or no theology. Probably the most out-and-out materialist would admit that in the western world the name of Jesus exercises a great influence. Perhaps he would even admit that there is no name which means so much to those who hear it. The strongest civilizations on earth reverence that name. Another greatly revered name is that of Gautama, and we think it would be generally admitted that the influence of this mighty and beautiful spirit possesses a similar intensity, and personal value which is similar to that of Jesus. The name of Jesus, which stands for a moral ideal which is the very negation of materialism, commands a reverence, and a worship. It is a notable fact that although churches and creeds are losing some of their hold upon the modern mind, the name of Jesus is still held in great regard. In seeking moral excellence the individual and humanity are thus moving toward an ideal already manifested in history.

THE JESUS OF TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY

But what has traditional Christian theology to say about Jesus? Here we enter a region in which the ordinary man of the world does not live and is never likely to live, but we cannot afford to ignore it.

According to the received theology, Jesus was and is God and man in a sense in which no one else ever has been or ever will be. As the shorter catechism has it, following the language of the ancient creeds, "There are three persons in one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory," and Christ is the second of the three. This kind of statement cannot but be confusing to the ordinary mind of today if only because the word "person" does not mean to us quite the same thing that it meant to the framers of the ancient creeds. The Athanasian creed is a magnificent piece of work if only the churches would consent to understand it in terms of the oldest theology of all! But, according to conventional theology, the second Person in the Trinity, who was coequal and coeternal with God the Father, laid aside His glory, became incarnate for our salvation, was born of a virgin, lived a brief suffering life, wrought many miracles, died a shameful death, rose again from the tomb on the second morning after He had been laid in it, and ascended into heaven in full view of His wondering disciples. In fulfillment of a promise made by Him shortly before the crucifixion, and repeated before the ascension, He and the Father conjointly sent a third person in the Trinity to endue with power from on high the simple men

whose duty it now became to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the world. Jesus Christ is now on the throne of His glory, but sooner or later He will come again to wind up the present dispensation and to be the Judge of the quick and the dead at a grand assize.

There is a sense in which this is true, but it is commonly expressed in such a way that the truth is lost sight of. Literally understood it is incredible. The only way to get at the truth in everyone of these venerable articles of the Christian faith will be to shed the husk, and that we must do without hesitation or compromise. A more accurate historic perspective would save us from the crudities which repel so many intelligent men from the benefits of public worship. There never has been the slightest need for any man of thoughtful mind and reverent spirit to recoil from the fundamentals of the Christian creed. Rightly understood they are the fundamentals of human nature itself.

GODHEAD AND MANHOOD

The first in order of thought is that of the Godhead of Jesus. As regards this tenet we think it should be easily possible to show that the most convinced adherent of the traditional theology does not believe and never has believed what he professes to hold. The terms with which we have to deal are Deity, divinity, and humanity. A good deal of confusion exists concerning the interrelation of these three. It is supposed that humanity and divinity are mutually exclusive, and that divinity and Deity must necessarily mean exactly the same thing. But this is not so. It follows from the first principle that all the three are fundamentally and essentially one, but in scope and extent they are different. By the Deity we mean the all-controlling consciousness of the universe as well as the infinite, unfathomable, and un-knowable abyss of being beyond. By divinity we mean the essence of the nature of the immanent God, the innermost and all-determining quality of that nature; we have already seen that according to the Christian religion the innermost quality of the divine nature is perfect love. It is clear, then, that although Deity and divinity are essentially one, the latter is the lesser term and is dependent for its validity upon the former. Humanity is a lesser term still.

It stands for that expression of the divine nature which we associate with our limited human consciousness. Strictly speaking, the human and divine are two categories which shade into and imply each other; humanity is divinity viewed from below, divinity is humanity viewed from above. If any human being could succeed in living a life of perfect love, that is alive whose energies were directed toward impersonal ends, and which was lived in such a way as to be and do the utmost for the whole, he would show himself divine, for he would have revealed the innermost of God.

The devotion of Christians has been right in recognizing in Him the one perfect human life, that is, the one life which consistently and from first to last was lived in terms of the whole. In a sense, everything that exists is divine, because the whole universe is an expression of the being of God. It is wise and right to restrict the word "divine" to the kind of consciousness which knows itself to be, the expression of a love which is a consistent self-giving to the universal life. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him".

Jesus was divine simply because His life was never governed by any other principle. In Him humanity was divinity and divinity, humanity. Does any-one think that this brings Jesus Christ down to our level? Assuredly it does not; we are far too prone to be ruled by names. To the ordinary Christian this explanation of the divinity of Jesus may seem equivalent to the denial of His uniqueness, but it is nothing of the kind. We have already devoted some little space to emphasizing the obvious fact that it is impossible to deny the uniqueness of Jesus.

In order to fulfil our destiny and to crown and complete His work, (we too shall aim for that standard of excellence and reach the feet of Him in whose footsteps we follow however distant we may consider ourselves. Ed.) To stop short of manifesting the perfect love of God would be to fail of the object for which we are here and to render the advent of Jesus Christ useless. Christendom already knows this perfectly well, although it has not always succeeded in expressing it with perfect clearness. "Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He (or rather It) shall appear, we shall be like Him." In our practical religion we all, even the most reactionary of us, regard the divinity of Christ just in this way. We talk of imitating Him, conforming to His likeness, showing His spirit, and so on. Even in our relations with God we try to follow His lead; instinctively we range our-selves with Him when we address the universal Father; until we come to creed-making we never think of putting Him on the God side of things and ourselves on another. Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or unorthodox, Unitarian or Trinitarian, we all accept in practice the identity of the divine and human in Jesus Christ and potentially in ourselves.

JESUS CHRIST AND DEITY

This brings us to the further question of the Deity of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, this question, too, has long been settled in practice. If by the Deity of Jesus Christ is meant that He possessed the all-controlling consciousness of the universe, and then assuredly He was not the Deity for He did not possess that consciousness. He prayed to His Father, some-times with agony and dread; He wondered, suffered, wept, and grew weary. He confessed His ignorance of some things and declared Himself to have no concern with others; it is even doubtful how far He was prepared to receive the homage of those about Him. If there be one thing which becomes indisputable from the reading of the gospel narratives it is that Jesus Christ possessed a true human consciousness, limited like our own, and like our own, subject to the ordinary ills of life. Once again everybody knows this after a fashion. If Jesus Christ was the Deity, He certainly was not the whole of the Deity during His residence on earth. But, it may be objected, in His earthly life He was the Deity self-limited: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," etc. Quite so, but see where this statement leads. Does this self-limitation of Jesus Christ mean that the Deity was lessened in any way during the incarnation? Why, of course not, we should all say; the Deity continued with infinite fullness unimpaired above and beyond the consciousness of Jesus. Then are we to understand that this self-limitation of Jesus Christ meant that the eternal Son, or second person in the Trinity, the Word by whom the worlds were made, quitted the throne of His glory and lived for thirty-three years as a Jewish peasant? Was the full consciousness of the eternal Word present in the babe of Bethlehem, for instance? If not, where was it? Questions like these cannot be answered on the lines of the conventional Christology. The plain and simple answer to all of them is to admit that the Jesus of history did not possess the consciousness of Deity all the while during His life on earth. His consciousness was as purely human as our own. Any special insight which He possessed into the true relations of God and man was due to the moral perfection of His nature. He was God manifest in the flesh because His life was a consistent expression of divine life. But He was not God manifest in the flesh in any way which would cut Him off from the rest of human kind.

According to the received theology, Jesus and Jesus only, out of all the beings who have ever trodden the road which humanity has to travel, existed before all ages. We live our threescore years and ten and then pass on into eternity; He was eternal to begin with. He comes to earth with a hoary antiquity behind Him, a timeless life to look back upon; we have just fluttered into existence. Surely an ordinary intelligence can see that this kind of theologizing puts an impassable gulf at once between Jesus and every other person who has ever been born of an

earthly mother. Certainly it does, the theologian may declare, and rightly so, for that gulf exists; He assumed human nature, but he was eternally divine before He did so, and we are not.

We do not need to refute this argument; the trend of modern thought is already doing so most effectually. It is a gratuitous assumption without a shred of evidence to support it. Besides, unfortunately for this kind of statement, the scientific investigation of Christian origins, and the application of the scientific method to the history of Christian doctrine have shown us how the dogma of the Deity of Jesus grew up. It was a comparatively late development in Christianity, and its practical implications never have been accepted, although at one time there was a danger that the winsome figure of Jesus would be removed altogether from the field of human interest and regard.

The Jesus of Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" is a terrifying figure without a trace of the lowly Nazarene about Him, and yet this was the Jesus of the conventional Christianity of the time. It was through this dehumanizing of Jesus in Christian thought and experience that Mariolatry arose in the Roman church. Could anything be more grotesque than the suggestion that the mother of Jesus should need to plead with her son to be merciful with frail humanity? And yet this is what it came to; the figure of Mary was introduced in order to preserve a real humanity in our relations with the Godhead!

THE ETERNAL CHRIST

In the course of Christian history much has been said of the complex unity of the divine nature; and the result has been the doctrine of the Trinity, a conception which, it has been claimed, at once satisfies and transcends the operations of the human intellect. Most non-theological minds are, however, somewhat suspicious of the doctrine of the Trinity; it seems rather too speculative and too remote from ordinary ways of thinking to possess much real value. But this is quite a mistake. We cannot dispense with the doctrine of the Trinity, for it is implied in the very structure of the mind. It belongs to philosophy even more than to religion, and not less to the sphere of ethics. All thinking starts with an assumption of some kind, and without an assumption, thought is impossible. This is just as true of the strictest scientific processes as it is of deductive reasoning, and indeed it is interesting to watch the way in which within recent years idealistic philosophy and empirical science have joined hands. To use the mind at all we have to assume this doctrine even though we may not actually formulate it. Christianity did not invent it; it clarified and defined it, but in principle it is as old as the exercise of human reason.

THE BASIC ASSUMPTION OF THOUGHT

We shall begin by making a comprehensive assertion that all thinking starts with an assumption of some kind. Exact thought requires that that assumption shall be the simplest possible, the irreducible minimum beneath which we cannot get. Now when we start thinking about existence as a whole and ourselves in particular, we are compelled to assume the infinite, the finite, and the activity of the former within the latter. In other words we have to postulate God, the universe, and God's operation within the universe. Look at these three conceptions for a moment and it will be seen that every one of them implies the rest; they are a Trinity in unity. The primordial being must be infinite, for there cannot be a finite without something still beyond it. We know, too, that to our experience the universe is finite; we can measure, weigh, and analyse it - an impossible thing to do with an infinite substance. And yet if we think of infinite and finite as two entirely distinct and unrelated modes of existence, we find ourselves in an impossible position, for the infinite must be that outside of which nothing exists or can exist; so of course we are compelled to think of the infinite as ever active within the finite, the source of change and motion, the exhaustless power which makes possible the very idea of development from simplicity to complexity. If the universe were complete in itself, change would not occur, and a cosmic evolutionary process would be inconceivable. Here, then, we have the basic factors of any true theology, philosophy, or science.

THE MORAL BASIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

It may be contended that these bare bones of the doctrine of the Trinity are not the doctrine as it enters into spiritual experience. We admit the fact while asserting strongly that but for this framework of intellectual necessity the doctrine would be unknown to faith and morals. It is sometimes stated that the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated in order to account for Jesus, but that is only incidentally true. Its framers took the materials for it over from Greek thought, and even Greek thought probably inherited it from an older civilization still, if indeed there were any necessity to inherit it. If we had never heard of the doctrine in connection with Jesus, we should have to invent it now in order to account for ourselves and the wondrous universe in which we live.

Unquestionably, however, it is from the point of view of religion and morals that the doctrine has most significance, and therefore has become indissolubly associated with the

personality of Jesus; and it is easy to see how this has come about. Thinkers have always been compelled to construe the universe in terms of the highest known to man, namely, his own moral nature. It was natural therefore, that while they thought of the universe as an expression of God, they should think of it as the expression of that side of His being which can only be described as the ideal or archetypal manhood. The infinite being of God is utterly incomprehensible to the finite mind. If the history of Christianity is in any way familiar, it may be seen how difficult it has been and often still is to preserve a balance between the intellectual and the emotional expressions of Christianity.

There is always a danger to over-intellectualize. Since the Reformation the non-Sacramental churches have minimized the devotional and ritualistic aspect of religion (though efforts are reviving to bring more liturgical activity into many Protestant services. Ed.)

This intricate subject of the Trinity can be understood by the intellectual. We can go so far as to say that until we understand by our highest intellect the mysteries of our religion, we cannot be forceful in our religious life. Without intellectual understanding we are like a dove flying to heaven with one wing; but with two wings, that of faith and understanding our speed is swifter and the flight more beautiful.

The Trinity is known in other faiths also. The Hindus enumerate the Trinity as the Holy Ghost, the Son and the Father, also known as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. All these intricate studies have perhaps little value to us in daily life.

But the more we understand the nature of the universe, the more we know of the nature of God and the ways in which He works in the world, the fuller we can cooperate with Him.

The Trinity is the most inspiring of Realities, but it is only real to us as we discover the Trinity in our own selves.

If God exists as a Trinity, so does man. If there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, there is also Man the Father, Man the Son, and Man the Holy Ghost exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ. We understand the Trinity, not by trying to comprehend it with the mind, but rather by bringing out of ourselves aspect after aspect. (Try to use this idea in your meditations! Ed.)

By wielding power and by giving protection, by martial valour, by ability to organize, to take command, to take responsibility, we commune with the "First Aspect" - God the Father.

Equally the development of our nature through love and devotion enables us slowly to become attuned and be at one in our nature with all manifestations. That is one way of community with God the Son.

Beauty is creation and manifestation is the expression of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit pervading all things.

There is a power in understanding which will make you see one divine plan dominating all things, and as you train yourselves in this aspect the Holy Ghost in you through understanding, and then you do begin to realize something of what the Holy Ghost is as the "Giver of Life."

You will never unravel the mystery of the Trinity by meditation, but only as you develop within you the three aspects which God has put there.

Be yourself the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer and Regenerator; be yourself the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and you will then know the great mystery which ever reveals some of its truth to you, yet ever remains a mystery - the Mystery of the Trinity, One in Three and Three in One.

THE DIVINE MAN

The idea of a divine Man, the emanation of the infinite, the soul of the universe, the source and goal of all humanity, is ages older than Christian theology. It can be traced in Babylonian religious literature, for instance, at a period older even than the Old Testament. It played a not unimportant part in Greek thought, and Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus, works it out in some detail in his religio-philosophic system, which aimed to combine the wide outlook of Greek culture with the high seriousness of Hebrew religion. It is a true, indeed an inevitable, conception, if we hold anything like a consistent view of the immanence of God in His universe. With what expression of God have we to do except the God who is eternally man? This aspect of the nature of God has been variously described in the course of its history. It has been called the Word, the Son, and as we have seen, the second person in the Trinity. For various reasons we prefer to call it - or rather Him - the eternal Christ. We do this because, for one thing, the word "Christ" is a living word with a clearly marked ethical content and a great religious value. Originally, of course, it was but the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah, and meant the "anointed one," the person chosen for a special divine work.

But in the New Testament, especially the writings of St. Paul, as well as all Christian history through, it are associated on the one hand with the personality of Jesus, and on the other, with the fontal or ideal Man who contains and is expressed in all human kind. According to the New Testament writers, Jesus was and is the Christ, but in His earthly life His consciousness of the fact was limited. But, as we have come forth from this fontal manhood, we too must be to some extent expressions of this eternal Christ; and it is in virtue of that fact that we stand related to Him. Here is where the value of our belief in the interaction of the higher and the lower self comes in. Fundamentally our being is already one with that of the eternal Christ. Jesus is not one being and the Christ another; the two are one, and Jesus seems to have known it during His earthly ministry. He lived His life in such a way as to reveal the very essence of the Christ nature. He is therefore central for us, and we are complete in Him. Here is the goal of all moral effort - Christ. Here, too, is the highest reach of the religious ideal - Christ.

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

THE CHRIST OF ST. PAUL

We have here the key to the Christology of that great thinker and preacher, the apostle Paul. It is this ideal or eternal Christ who is the object of his faith and devotion. He even goes so far as to warn his readers not to dwell too much upon the limited earthly Jesus, but upon His true being in the eternal reality: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." He does not say, "To me to live is Jesus," but, "To me to live is Christ." Paul seems to have had a vivid impression as to what the character of Jesus was really like, and he gave himself up to the worship of this with all his heart. Paul always thought of Him, and truly, as the Lord who came down from heaven, but he does not draw a sharp line of distinction between Him and the rest of humanity. He calls Jesus "the firstborn among many brethren." He speaks of the summing up of all things in Christ, and of the final consummation when God shall be all in all. Paul requires to be rescued from the inadequate and distorting

interpretations his thought has received in the course of its history. He brought this conception of the eternal Christ into Christianity from pre-Christian thought, saw it ideally revealed in Jesus, and then bade mankind respond to it and realize it to be the true explanation of our own being. Sometimes he appears to deviate from this view, and to say things inconsistent with it, but that we need not mind; he saw it, and that is enough. It forms the foundation of his gospel.

