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CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY

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As HAS often been remarked, there is between Christianity and all other religions one prominent characteristic and real difference. We can notice this in the minor religions; for, although they recognize a Highest Being called the Great Spirit, the Exalted Father, the Mighty Lord, yet this is generally a dead belief, especially among the common people. All these religions drift in practice into animism and fetichism, into superstition and sorcery. But all the higher religions differentiate themselves from Christianity in one chief point. They without doubt have various noble characteristics, so that they do not stand in exclusive antithesis to Christianity, but afford the missionary many points of contact, and in all these grades of affinity must not be repelled but won and strengthened. Yet they have a distinctive and entirely different character than the Christian religion and indicate this mainly in the place and significance which they assign to their founders. Zoroaster in the Persian, Confucius in the Chinese, Gautama in the Buddhist, and Mohammed in the Islam religion are indeed greatly talented and were later also honored as more or less deified persons who had marked out a definite way of salvation, but each individual must after all travel that way for himself and is finally his own saviour. All these religions are, according to the characterization of Ed. von Hartmann, auto-soteric.

However, in the Christian religion, Christ is, as it were, Christianity. He once lived upon earth not only

to leave behind His precepts and example so that He returning could be fully satisfied if Christianity simply ruled in the heart, even though He Himself might be entirely forgotten (J. G. Fichte), but He is the living Lord who now sitteth at the right hand of God and continues the work of redemption through His Word and Spirit. In this particular all the articles of faith in the above named religions contain a different meaning, as well about God and the world as about man, his sin, his redemption, and his destiny. The Chinese religion is deistic, the Buddhist atheistic, the Persian dualistic, the Mohammedan fatalistic.

In none of these is there a true conception of God's holiness and of the nature of sin, of the work of redemption, and of the development and completion of God's kingdom. The love of the Father, the grace of His Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit are unknown to them all. And that we are able to judge all these religions in this manner from a higher point of view—acknowledging the good in them and pointing out that which is erroneous and weak in them—we have to thank Christianity, which also proves itself thereby to be the true religion, the correction and completion of all religions.

From the very beginning, therefore, the confession that Jesus was the Son of God formed the foundation of the church (Matt. 16:13-18). The answer to the question: "What think ye of Christ?" marked a difference between the friends and the enemies of Jesus (Matt. 22:42), and from the confession that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world did the church and the history of dogma take their rise. Just as the disciples of Jesus already at Antioch received the name of Christians (Acts

11:26) and in public gave the impression that they revered Him as God (Pliny) were they themselves also clearly conscious that they thought of Christ as of God, as the Judge of the quick and the dead (Clemens). But at the formulation of this confession all manner of difficulties arose, and the reef of Ebionism (Judaism) on the one side and of Gnosticism (ethnicism) on the other had to be avoided; since, according to the former belief, Jesus was simply—especially at His baptism—entrusted with rich talents, a glorified and deified person; according to the latter, He was a temporary, heavenly, deified being appearing in human flesh.

Under the leadership of men such as Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and others the church sailed safely between these two reefs and gradually came to the settled confessions of the councils, viz., that the Christ, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God, had, in the fulness of time, taken the nature of man, from the Virgin Mary, in a unity of Persons. This confession became the central article of faith of the Christian churches, the common foundation upon which they to the present time are all built and acknowledge and esteem each other as Christian churches.

This was not a matter of indifference, much less of an abstract formula, but of the real existence of Christianity itself, of its absolute character, of its specific distinction from Judaism and heathenism, of the reality and finality of the Christ-given divine revelation, and hence also of the independent existence and individual life of the church. This conception of Christianity found its expression in the doctrine of the two natures. Although in this doctrine human frailty need not be denied, yet it teaches much better

than the view of Christ as being from below and from above, according to the flesh and the Spirit the historic reality and the idea, what Jesus really was and what the church possessed in Him. Justice was therefore done only when the Incarnation was in reality distinguished from and highly exalted above inspiration and inhabitation and when also Jesus as born from the fathers as to the flesh was confessed as God over all.

Around this Christological dogma there centered as a matter of course, as it were, a world-embracing and humanity-ruling confession. For this Christ was truly the Son of God who in the beginning created the world and had fashioned man in His own image. He was the mediator of redemption who had in His person and work reconciled and united the sin-cursed world with God, and after His ascension poured out His Spirit, so that through Word and sacrament He might gather a church and renew man and the world into a Kingdom of God.

Viewed from the subjective and anthropological side Christianity is thus, indeed, one among many religions, a confession of man. But that confession implies that God as Father, Son, and Spirit establishes a great work in the world. Christianity stands before the soul in its truth and holiness only when we view it from the objective theological side, and therein glorify that Godlike work wherein the Father reconciles His created but fallen world through the death of His Son, and recreates it by His Spirit into a Kingdom of God.

After that, in the unfolding of the ages, greatly varying ideas were formed concerning the essence of Christianity, particularly since the formal search for

that character was instituted after the eighteenth century. Up to that time no necessity for this was felt, because men rejoiced in the possession of Christianity and felt entirely at home in the characteristic conception which the church to which they belonged expressed in its confession. Christianity was for every one identical with that dogma, that cult, and that church government which he found in his own religious fellowship; whatever deviated from it was impure and mixed with more or less error.

But when, during and after the Reformation, the various confessions, churches, and sects constantly increased, another conception of Christianity gradually began to make a way for itself. The Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxy soon made a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith; the theologians of Helmstadt, with Calixtus as leader, returned to the apostolic creed; the so-called Bible theologians declared the New Testament doctrines, which they derived, as they thought, from an exegesis independent of the church's teaching, to be true Christianity; and the Deists and Rationalists were of opinion that Christianity consisted alone in those Scripture truths which agreed with reason and were discovered through reason, or at least could have been so found.

Since that time the conceptions concerning the nature of Christianity have endlessly increased. Because, first, the churches, sects, and religious societies have alarmingly multiplied in the nineteenth century and each one of them holds a particular view of Christianity and of the Person of Christ. And further there have been added various representations concerning religion proposed by the theologians and philosophers, historians and socialists, which have exercised

an influence in narrower or wider circles. We have but to recall Kant and Hegel, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Gunkel and Troeltsch, Kautsky and Maurenbrecher, Green, John Caird, Josiah Royce—and one can fill out this list according to his own will. Most divergent answers are to-day given to the question as to the nature of Christianity. There are as many Christs preached as there are scholars or quasi-scholars. The condition seems to be so confusing and hopeless that not a few have become skeptics and declare truth to be undiscoverable.

Still in the struggles of the various opinions there are certain encouraging signs of agreement.

1. There is no church or trend of thought that identifies its conceptions of Christianity with the original Christianity itself. True, each party holds its own interpretation as the correct one, and defends it against all others, but nevertheless each church and each school of thought makes a distinction between the truth as it is in Jesus, and the view which it has received and which it has expressed in a faulty, fallible manner in its confession of faith. The Roman Catholic Church is an exception to this in so far as it attributes infallibility to the Pope and pronounces its doctrine as the only true and absolutely correct interpretation of the Gospel. And yet even it makes a distinction between Christ and the Pope as His representative, between the inspiration of the apostles and the assistance of the Holy Spirit which the head of the church enjoys. There is no one who, in principle, disputes the distinction between the truth of Scripture and the dogma of the church.

This remark is not without weight against those who call their private personal interpretation of the

Gospel the historical in distinction from the dogmatic, which they ascribe to the churches. The churches have also, indeed, justly and earnestly endeavored to give in their confessions as pure a description of the Gospel as was possible; and men, such as Harnack, e. g., who reject these conceptions and present an individual explanation, never advance any further than to give a representation of the original Gospel which in their own opinion deserves preference over the others. They do not, therefore, set *the* Gospel in the place of the ecclesiastical dogma, but never advance any further than to offer a *different conception* of the Gospel than that which is honored in the churches. The conflict is not, therefore, between dogmatic or historical interpretation, but involves only the question as to what was the original Christianity.

2. There exists in this also, furthermore, a strong agreement, viz., that the question as to the essence of Christianity becomes identical with that which concerns the original, genuine, and true Christianity, and that in order to learn to know this latter we must return to the Scriptures, particularly to the New Testament. There are really no other sources. The testimony of Josephus concerning Jesus is critically suspicious and contains nothing new; the slanders which the Jews since the middle of the second century brought forth to combat Christianity may have found acceptance with Celsus, Porphyrius, and in recent date with Haeckel, but they do not come into consideration in an earnest search after the original Christianity. The short utterances about Jesus and the Christians by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny are in themselves, it is true, important and place the historical existence of Jesus beyond reasonable doubt; but they do not

increase our knowledge of original Christianity. And the many apocryphal gospels which arose in Ebionite and Gnostic circles betray a too prejudiced character to be considered as being of trustworthy source. Among the recently discovered precepts of Jesus there are but a few which perhaps did flow from His lips and were preserved pure in tradition. But with these few exceptions we have no other sources of knowledge of the life of Jesus than the books of the New Testament, and more particularly speaking the four Gospels. For that which is mentioned of that life in the other books of the New Testament is comparatively little and is substantially contained in these Gospels.

3. To this it is to be added that the long conflict over the genuineness and trustworthiness of the books of the New Testament and especially the Gospels has not at all led to a generally accepted result but yet has come to a certain point of rest. No one thinks for a moment to explain Christianity as it is accepted by the churches, and fundamentally expressed in their Christology, as having originated through Hellenistic or other foreign influences in the second century. The New Testament books, particularly the four main epistles of Paul, remain a protest against this, and could not have originated in or after that time. Consequently it is now quite universally acknowledged that the ecclesiastical Christology dates in substance from the first century and precedes the alleged Hellenistic influences on original Christianity. The reason for assigning to the second century the various New Testament books, herewith, at the same time, drops away. They have pretty nearly all been brought back successively by critics of note to the first century. In 1897 Harnack said that there was a time when the

oldest Christian literature was considered a tissue of deception and falsification, but that time is past; we are returning to the traditions. The chronological order in which tradition has arranged the documents of Christianity from the epistles of Paul to the writings of Irenæus is to be considered in all essentials correct. And this opinion of the Berlin professor has since that time been agreed to by the many.

Herewith naturally the center of gravity of the scientific research was shifted from literary criticism to *Religions-Geschichte*. For although the oldest churches, so far as we can trace their origin from sources at hand, confessed Jesus as the Christ, there still remained the possibility of these two interpretations, viz., that Christ was the product of the church, or the church the product of Christ. In the former case we must imagine something like this: That for a long time a group of religious persons existed, or perhaps had organized themselves under the influence of social circumstances, who united the various characteristics of the Christ image found in the New Testament with those from Jewish, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, or Indian sources, and applied these to a certain Jesus whose historical existence is questionable. Although this attempted explanation made progress for a while, it soon, however, proved to be vain. The Christ myth has already had its day, and firmer than ever does the historical existence of Christ stand among the circle of scholars.

But this existence alone is as little satisfactory to science as it is to the faith of the church. It is not a matter of concern only *that* Jesus was, but still more *what* He was. And research has certainly led to some result.

Indeed, just as little as the Gospels enabled a former generation to write a Life of Jesus which satisfied mind and heart, do they offer the critics of our day opportunity to return from the Christ of Scriptures to the so-called historical Christ. The attempt to remove all layers of soil so deeply that we come to stand upon the rock-bottom of reality has been a complete fiasco. The cry: From Paul and John back to Christ, back to the Jesus of the Synoptics, or particularly of the Sermon on the Mount, has proved to be a hollow sound because the Christ image in all the New Testament books is in substance the same. How could Paul in that case have arrived at his doctrine of Christ? How could he have found acceptance among the congregations with his so-called "falsification" of the original Gospels? And how could he have received the right hand of fellowship from the apostles in Jerusalem after he had explained his Gospel to them (Gal. 2:2-9) if in this fundamental article of belief he had cherished an entirely different thought, and thus had preached another Christ?

There was, it is true, a difference between Paul and certain brethren among the Jews, but this difference applied chiefly to consequences which flowed forth from the Gospel as concerning the Old Testament law. But concerning the Person of Christ, His life, death, resurrection, and second coming, there was no question. All apostles were in agreement on this point; of a Christological controversy there was no thought among them. The first three Gospels are derived from disciples of Jesus, i. e., of believers just as much as are the Gospel of John and the epistles of Paul. They were at least also written in a time when already a

number of congregations existed and for a public which had been instructed concerning the Person and work of Christ by apostles, and they did not proclaim any other Jesus as the Christ than was preached by *all* the apostles and was confessed by all believers of that day. It is *one* harmonious Christ image which the New Testament in all its books presents to us.

At the close of the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius (779 after the founding of Rome and 26-27 A.D.), when Herod Antipas was king of Galilee and Peræa and Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea, there was a remarkable religious revival among the Jews. Suddenly there appeared a man out of the desert of Judea whose countenance bore the marks of an abstemious life, who wore no other clothes than a rough mantle of camel's hair fastened with a leathern girdle around his loins and who called all who would listen to him to repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. With this preaching did John, later called the Baptist, tread in the footsteps of the old prophets who also had constantly urged their people to repent. But he enforced his exhortation with the prophecy that the long expected Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The Old Testament had indeed taught that God is King of all the earth (Psalms 24; 29; Jer. 10:7, etc.), and that, since the establishment of His covenant at Sinai, He was in a special sense King of His people Israel (Isa. 33:22), but that kingship of God had been steadily less acknowledged on the part of the people, and was continually more earnestly withstood. If that kingship of God was ever to be realized, it could not be along the line of regular development, but it had to descend suddenly from above by a special gracious

and mighty deed of God, and hence it became more and more the prayer and at the same time the expectation of pious Israelites that God would open the heavens, and by His own descent reveal His righteousness and grace (Isa. 64:1, etc.).

Daniel especially worked out this idea: After the world kingdom will the Kingdom of God descend from above. The four world kingdoms which preceded it were like four beasts coming out of the sea, out of the world beneath, but after that would come a Kingdom represented as a stone hewn out of the mountain without hands, growing itself into a mountain, and that is the Kingdom which the God of Heaven will develop, which will not be hindered (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45), and which will be given to the holy people (Dan. 7:18, 27) by the mediation of One who will come upon the clouds of the heavens in the likeness of a Son of Man (Dan. 7:13). Therefore did this Kingdom later receive the name of the Kingdom of Heaven, for was it not to come from above and descend out of Heaven upon earth? (Compare John 18:36.)

John the Baptist announced the imminence of that Kingdom and added that not the seed of Abraham, not circumcision, not righteousness according to the law, but conversion alone, change of mind, a religious-ethical renewal of heart opens entrance to that Kingdom. And he confirmed this by baptism which he administered to all who came to him with confession, as a sign and seal of their conversion and great grace of forgiveness which was both condition and meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven. John made a tremendous impression by this preaching. True, the Pharisees and Sadducees assumed a critical attitude toward him. They were, therefore, spoken to with strong language

and were threatened with judgment (Matt. 3:7-12), but the people streamed from all quarters to him, from Jerusalem and all Judea and the land around the Jordan, and were baptized by him, confessing their sins (Matt. 3:5, 6; 21:32).

Many from Galilee also came to him (Matt. 11:7-9), and among these was Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary, who was born in Bethlehem but brought up in Nazareth (Mark 1:9) and who came to John for the express purpose of being baptized by him (Matt. 3:13). This baptism had great significance not only for Jesus, but also for John. For up to this time he had declared as firmly as possible that he himself was not the Messiah, but that One stronger than he was to come after him, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. 3:13); but now at the baptism of Jesus he received the revelation that this was the Messiah. This general witness, which thus far was given by John and is to be found in the Synoptics, now received a special character and became a sign that Jesus was the Son of God and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, as the Fourth Gospel particularly speaks of Him.

But this baptism also brought a turning point in the life of Jesus. Of His childhood and youth little is known. It is recorded only that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, was circumcised the eighth day, and a few weeks later was presented to the Lord in the temple. Later He went annually with His parents to attend the feasts at Jerusalem, and as a lad of twelve years of age already testified that He must be about His Father's business (or in His Father's house).

However, soon after His baptism, which was the confirmation of His Sonship, the anointing with God's Spirit, and the qualification for His official work, He appeared in public among His own people. The word which He brought sounded the same as that of John: The fulness of time has come and the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand; repent and believe the Gospel, viz., of that Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). That was the theme of His teaching, but He worked it out broader and deeper than had been possible with John or any of the prophets before him. The Kingdom of God is above all things a gift which came from above, and is given according to God's will to those for whom it was prepared from the foundation of the world, so that it can be received only in a childlike faith. However, it must at the same time be sought by man (not established by a moral life) and must be appreciated as a treasure or pearl above all price. In so far as it can thus be received here on earth, and the riches of that Kingdom, truth, righteousness, forgiveness of sins, peace, life, can be enjoyed, is it even now present. It realizes itself here on earth in proportion as Satan's power is destroyed. The Kingdom of God is, therefore, likened unto a seed and leaven which gradually develop. Yet it will be fully realized only in the future when the heirs receive eternal life in Heaven, partaking of the reward of their struggles and labor and shall all sit together at the feast prepared by the Father.

The only way which leads to and into that Kingdom for the continuous enjoyment of its blessings is that of faith and conversion, rebirth and self-surrender, cross bearing and following of Jesus. One must sacrifice all for that Kingdom, houses and lands, parents and children—even pluck out an eye and cut off

hand and foot if they become hindrances. It becomes the possession only of the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the merciful, etc. And these citizens of the Kingdom are but children, children of the Father who is in Heaven, and mutually brethren. Doing the will of God forms them into a new family, into a community separated from the world, who have but *one* Master and are led and ruled by the apostles in His name.

The most remarkable feature of the teaching of Jesus is, however, the place which He assigns to Himself in the Kingdom of Heaven. He is perfect and real man, who calls Himself mild and meek, who is dependent in all things on, and subject to, the Father, who again and again retires in solitude to seek strength in prayer. Day and hour of the future of God's Kingdom are not known by Him; places in that Kingdom are not under His but the Father's appointment; He Himself has come to serve and to suffer. At the same time there is as foundation in all His appearance and undertakings, in all His words and deeds, such a mighty and exalted self-consciousness that every one receives the impression that He stands far above all mankind. And this self-consciousness manifests itself in a self-witness which in any other person would suggest self-conceit. But this is noticeable, that He calls Himself meek and lowly of heart, without anyone daring to be offended by it. Although in all respects man He realizes Himself to be at all times more than man. Even as a lad of twelve years He is conscious of an inner fellowship with the Father and declares that He must be about His Father's business. And that fellowship is never interfered with or broken. Of falling and rising again, of stumbling and standing

again, there is with Him no thought. His prayers even in His deepest and heaviest suffering never contain a confession of sin, or any suing for forgiveness. He is greater than Jonah or Solomon, greater than the angels, and the temple. Blessed are the eyes that see what the disciples behold; the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist, who yet was the greatest among those born of woman. He is Lord of the Sabbath and sets His "I say unto you" over against all scribes. He dispenses the riches of the Kingdom and has power to forgive sins, although this, according to the convictions of the Jews, belongs only to God. He goes about doing good, healing the sick and all ills among the people, and by the sheer power of His word raises the dead. In distinction from all servants He is the Father's Son, to whom is surrendered all that pertains to the realization of the Kingdom of God, and who only can lead to the Father and can receive into His fellowship. He is not only a prophet who testifies to the Kingdom of God, but He is its King who causes it to come through His works which He accomplishes by the Spirit of God, and who dispenses it to others even as it was given to Him by the Father. On the attitude which men assume toward Him depends their destruction or their salvation. Whosoever confesses Him before men will He confess before His Father in Heaven. Whosoever will be ashamed of Him and for His and the Gospel's sake does not leave all, cannot be His disciple and is not worthy of Him. He pronounces woes over Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Jerusalem, because they would not receive Him. After He had run His earthly course He is seated at the right hand of God, and will return upon the clouds of glory as Judge

of all the earth, to judge all, and to reward each one according to the deeds done in the body.

Further, this mighty self-consciousness that implies nothing less than that He stands in an entirely unique relation to the Father, and is His Son in a special sense, constitutes the basis of His Messiahship. It has, indeed, been argued in these latter days that Jesus did not announce Himself as being the Messiah, but that the church came to ascribe this title to Him only after its belief in His resurrection. But this opinion is contradicted by the facts in the case. We have but to bear in mind the entry into Jerusalem, the avowal of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate, the mockery of the soldiers, the inscription above the cross, that certainly are not to be assigned by any criticism to the realm of fables. And not only later, at the end of His life or after the days of Cesaræa Philippi, did He become conscious of His Messiahship, but we meet with it on His part even when a lad of twelve years in the temple. He received the sign and seal of it at the baptism by John; in the temptation in the wilderness He resisted all seductions to misuse it; in the synagogue of Nazareth He applied to Himself the prophecy of the *Servant of the Lord*; and from the very beginning of His public appearance He referred to Himself as being the Son of Man.

It is now quite universally accepted that He derived the name, Son of Man, from Dan. 7:13, and this proves, in the first place, that Jesus considered Himself as being the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. But, in the second place, the fact that He took just this particular name, avoiding even the name of Messiah, King, indicates that He was and wanted

to be such in a different sense from that in which the Jews then in general expected their Messiah. He indeed did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, to take the place of commander in Israel, to destroy His enemies and exalt Himself to be the head of the nation. On the contrary He came to minister and give His soul a ransom for many, to seek and to save the lost, to be betrayed and crucified, and to establish a new covenant between God and man through His blood. Therefore He constantly calls Himself Son of Man whenever He speaks of His humiliation. In this humiliation He recognizes a divine "must"—a work appointed to Him by the Father, a way which He must tread in order to arrive at His glory.

An effort has often been made to banish from the original Gospel this divine necessity for suffering and death and hereby also remove the High-priestly and propitiatory significance of His death. But again without result. Not only does Jesus often speak of this at the end of His life, and at the Last Supper, but the facts afford still stronger evidence. He was condemned by the Sanhedrin, by the people, and by Pilate, because He claimed to be the Son of God and Israel's Messiah. The entire life and work of Christ lead to His death upon the cross, according to His own word and the record of the four Gospels; and this death is the deepest depth of His humiliation, the evidence of His full obedience to God's will, the establishment of a new covenant in His blood, the highest revelation of His and the Father's love for a sinful world, which thereby He reconciles and saves. Therefore even death had no power over Him; the third day He rose from the dead and entered into His glory. Often in those instances where He speaks of His

future glory He calls Himself Son of Man. He could be the Messiah, the Son of Man, who entered into His glory through suffering because He was the Son of God who stood in an entirely unique relation to the Father and remained true to His will even in the death upon the Cross.

This teaching of the Person and work of Christ, which purposely was taken only from the third Synoptic Gospel, comprehends in germ what was later preached and written by the apostles concerning them. True, before the Resurrection the disciples had not yet a correct conception of His Being and work; the Gospels constantly declare this. For this reason did Jesus in His teaching take into account the capacity of His children, gradually leading them to a knowledge of His Sonship and Messiahship, and left much to the teaching of the Spirit. But the Resurrection caused a wonderful light to arise upon their souls. And when the exalted Christ had fulfilled His promise of the Spirit at Pentecost they not only temporarily received extraordinary gifts of tongues and of miracle working, but they received through that Spirit, who was indeed the Spirit of Christ, a powerful strengthening of faith, a comfort and joy, such as they had never before known—a fellowship of love which bound them together as brethren and gave them an extraordinary liberty to preach the Word.

And the substance of this Word was Christ. It concerned the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, who was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, who was manifested to the Jews by power and miracles, who went about doing good, healing all who were possessed of the devil. And this holy and just One did the Jews despise and kill. But this was according

to the purpose of God, so that God might exalt Him to be Lord and Christ, a Prince and Saviour who will come again to judge the quick and the dead, that repentance and forgiveness of sins may be preached in His name because there is no other salvation.

This was the teaching according to the testimony of Luke in the *Acts* and, after Pentecost, was heard particularly from the lips of Peter, to which all the apostles practically agree. It is true, an effort has often been made to point out a great difference, and a sharp contradiction, between the Synoptic Christ and the Christ of Paul and of John, between the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which Jesus Himself proclaimed and the Gospel which the Apostle preached concerning Christ. And some have at times gone so far as to call Paul the founder of (ecclesiastical) Christianity, the falsifier of the original Gospel, yes, even the anti-christ. But in these latter years there has most clearly come to light the impossibility of finding according to the Christ of Scriptures a Jesus who did not claim to be the Messiah, who performed no miracles and who did not rise from the dead.

The historical Jesus and the apostolic Christ cannot be separated—they are one and the self-same Person. That the historical Person, Jesus, was the Messiah promised of God in the Old Testament to His people is the kernel of the Christian confession, that distinguishes it from Judaism and heathenism. For this reason there is a difference in the portraiture of Jesus by the various apostles. There is a variation in language and style, in presentation and expression; there is also development and broadening. The pre-existence of Jesus, His cosmic significance, His divinity, also the substance and fruit of His work and

the mystical union between Him and the church appear much more clearly in the epistles of Paul and the writings of John than in the first three Gospels. But of contradiction there is no thought. The Synoptic Gospels are just as valid witnesses to the faith as are all the other books of the New Testament. Mark, whose Gospel is often spoken of as being the oldest, begins with the significant words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." All three were written in a time when Paul had for a long period preached his Gospel in wide circles, and upon which he had founded many congregations, and nothing in this early period is noticed of a controversy concerning the Person of Christ and His work. In this Paul agreed fully with all the apostles; all apostolic congregations were one in the confession of faith that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World, the Lord of the church, the Judge of the quick and the dead. They all had *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of us all, above all and in them all, and *one* Spirit through whom they were all built upon one foundation, through apostles and prophets, into the building of God.

With this preaching of Jesus as the Christ, the New Testament still confronts us. All writings contained in it are faith-witnesses and as such expect to be listened to and understood. Together they form the apostolic Gospel teaching as they are perpetuated and made for the general good of mankind in the Scriptures, just as they are repeated to the people every Sabbath from the pulpits and are spread among the heathen through the missionaries. It is of fundamental concern to look upon the writings of the New Testament in this manner as apostolic witnesses to

grace and truth as they are in Jesus. Neither the Old nor the New Testament comes to us as a book on history to teach us concerning lives of persons or nations, nor as the result of scientific labor wherein great thinkers have given us their systems; nor even as a product of culture or a phase of literature which was to increase the treasures of "fine arts and belle lettres." The Holy Scriptures are not to be placed in the same category, not even to be compared with the historical, philosophical, or literary works of the Greek-Roman world. They occupy their own peculiar place and bear an independent character. They are Gospel-preaching, faith-witnessing, expressed in the common daily language of that day, and designed for the church and its members. This is recognized more in our day than formerly, since treasures of inscriptions and papyri have enabled us to compare language and style, narration and letter form of the New Testament with those writings of old.

This is the particular method whereby all can receive and accept the witness of the apostles which comes to us through the Scriptures of the New Testament. In that sense it does not commend itself to our intellect, so as to submit itself to its criticism and to make its truth depend upon our research. It does not address itself to the wise and prudent or to the scribes and scholars of the age, because it knows beforehand that its existence does not depend upon their judgment; it is to the Greeks foolishness, to the Jews a stumbling block and not according to the wish or desire of the natural man (Matt. 11:25; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:11). But the Gospel of Christ addresses itself in the first instance to the heart and conscience, to man as a sinner who needs redemption and who everywhere

and always remains the same, even at the highest point of culture, with the same needs and the same aspirations. There is, therefore, no other way in which to receive the Gospel than by regeneration, faith, and conversion, the same way that the prophets and apostles and the entire church of the Old and New Testaments have trodden, that was pointed out to Nicodemus by Christ Himself: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3; compare 7:17; 1 Cor. 12:3).

But he who thus hears and accepts the Gospel receives it not as the word of man, but, as it truly is, the Word of God, and he beholds in the Word which became flesh a glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. Both go indissolubly together. Whoever believes in Christ also accepts His witness through the mouths of the apostles; and he who is not only a hearer but also a doer of the Word presses forward through the apostolic witness to the Christ Himself. And a new light arises upon all things for such; Christ, God, the world, man, nature, history, culture, all things in Heaven and on earth, receive, as to their origin, being, and object, another meaning and value; and Christianity, with Christ as center, becomes to him a new, beautiful, glorified world, and life-view, because the Mediator between God and man assures him of the extension and completion of the eternal Kingdom of God.