

XI

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE FAITH

WE are now drawing near the conclusion of our argument. We began with the riddle of the world. I have endeavoured to show that every human life has at its heart something sacred, a recognition of what is highest, which it is at once man's supreme good to realise and his supreme obligation to follow. The existence of this higher nature is that which above all distinguishes man from the natural world which begot and which sustains him. Yet this element in man which makes him sacred is continually threatened from without and within man himself, and is ultimately destroyed by the surrounding world of reality. The enduring tension between what we discern to be sacred and what is felt to be real and powerful seems to me to lie at the heart of all the great religions, with their continual quest for life and victory over the world, and of most of, if not of all, the great philosophies, with their ceaseless quest for some intelligible explanation of the human situation. No religion or philosophy which ignores this issue or tries to solve it by denaturing or explaining away man's sense of the good and the right can possibly endure. It may have its brief day but it will break up and pass away.

Having thus endeavoured to set forth the fundamental problem we passed on to consider the latest

modern attempt to deal with it in Humanism. I have tried to show why Humanism has reappeared in our time, and also how unsatisfactory it is both in theory and in practice. In the process of criticising it we have begun to develop against it, first, the spiritual view of the world which seems to me inevitably to follow from recognition of the world of values, and our moral obligation to seek and do the highest that we know, and secondly, the fuller world of divine revelation as we have it in the Old Testament. Briefly stated this solution of the riddle is that God, in whom sovereignty and supreme wisdom and goodness and beauty unite, is through Nature creating a kingdom of free human spirits in His own image and likeness for everlasting communion with Himself. I have endeavoured also to show how within that Hebrew history of which the Old Testament literature is the expression, there developed the elements of an interpretation of the world and of human life which forms a Theodicy, an explanation and justification of the ways of God with man, and have enumerated its characteristic ideas, man "made in God's image," his freedom and sin, the moral order of the universe, the vicarious law, the Kingdom of God, and, at last, immortality. The focal centre is the conception of and faith in God. It is in this central light that the Hebrews explain the nature of man and the world. "If we think of God so, then we must think of man and his world thus." The Hebrew prophets "come down upon the world from the thought of God," and interpret its riddle from their knowledge of God. That we have here, often in crude and elementary form, a

very great interpretation of the mystery of human life and death, seems to me clear.

In reading our more notable modern books of philosophy which grapple with the mystery, I have often been deeply impressed by the ability which they show in dealing with matters of detail. But when I have mastered the whole argument and got inside the writer's thoughts of the universe and of human life, I have often been growingly conscious of a profound intellectual dissatisfaction, a sense that the construction is unreal; that it denatures and sophisticates in order to reach a unity that is factitious; and that it imprisons the intelligence rather than sets it free. And when some complacent Humanist replies that this is simply because my thinking is "wishful thinking," with the implied assumption that his own is not, and that I am allowing my desires to determine my thoughts, I am acutely aware that it is not so, and that there is something deeply *irrational* in his own construction of thought which says that there is no meaning in the universe, no end to which it moves, though there are causes which impel its mighty course. Nor is the case better when one turns to some modern philosophical endeavours to solve the underlying and persistent problem. Can the human intelligence rest, for instance, permanently in the conception of an Absolute Reason which with infinite labour and wisdom creates human personalities only to engulf them in itself again; or in the conception of "space-time with a *nisus* or 'striving' in it" which is the ultimate source of all things and men and is always endeavouring to create God or the Ideal; or with a universe

whose source, if any, is unexplained, and whose one great aim is to create "wholes"?

I am haunted by the sense of something futile and irrational in the cosmic process if this is all that can be made of it by modern thought, something sub-human, by whatever sonorous name we may call it, and this staggers not simply my "wishes" but my intelligence.

I find in the Hebrew interpretation, given not in any scholastic or systematic form, often in mere fragments of piercing intuition, the elements of something that better satisfies my reason as well as my imagination, a profounder and broader view of the amazing panorama of Nature and of human life.

It is true that there is nothing in the Old Testament resembling a modern philosophic treatise, no systematic arrangement of topics or advance of an argument towards a conclusion. But modern historical and literary criticism of the Old Testament has been so concerned with analysis of its literature, the development of its ritual, its historical affiliations and so forth, that it has often seemed to ignore its fundamental unity of view of God and the world and the soul, and is unable to see the wood in its preoccupation with the trees. But if, as in the case of the modern philosophical books of which I have spoken, we, as it were, stand back far enough from the trees to see the wood, from details to see the whole, there emerges a deep underlying interpretation of the mystery of human life, which is on a different plane of importance than any merely literary or historical criticism. "Scripture has a meaning and a view of its own on most moral and religious questions, and not more

than one view really, although, of course, different writers may present the view with all the variety natural to different minds, and diverse circumstances, a view not to be inferred from any single text, but from the whole general tenor of thought of the Scripture writers.”¹ It takes much labour to become deeply familiar with this underlying mind, but it is there, underlying all the variety of literary form and developmental change, coherent, veracious, profound and, to my thinking, intellectually more satisfying than any of its great philosophical rivals, ancient or modern. The Old Testament is the classical literature of monotheism, and so long as men believe in the living God it will determine the main lines, not only of their thought of Him, but of man and of the world of Nature as well. Within this interpretation of the universe alone, I believe, can we include and explain the salient realities of the riddle without ignoring or blunting any of them, the baffling mixture of good and evil in the world, the sacredness of human personality, the sinfulness of man, the glory and tragedy of human life, even the reassuring blend of comedy in it, and finally the astonishing beauty which accompanies and blends with it all.

But the Old Testament revelation is obviously incomplete, and the more deeply we enter into it and are possessed by it, the more deeply must we feel this. It shows us a living God, through Nature creating and disciplining a family of spiritual beings for full communion with Himself, that is to say, for an ever fuller interchange of thought and

¹ A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 514.

affection to which there shall be no end. The motive of creation and providence is pure "grace," that is to say forthcoming and inexhaustible love. Hebrew thought moves here on a deeper plane than Indian thought, which sometimes speaks of Brahman as creating the worlds in sheer joyful sport, as a riot of Divine imagination. Monotheism can include even that in its deeper and wider range. God is shown to us in the Old Testament as rejoicing in His works of creation on the first morning, "when all the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But to the Hebrew God created man and created Israel, not as Shakespeare created Hamlet and Falstaff, or Rembrandt his "Man in Armour," or Wagner his heroes of "The Ring," out of sheer joy in creative imagination. A Divinity who, for His own artistic joy alone created the drama of human life and death with all its anguish and sin would have been an omnipotent devil. Not Divine Imagination but Divine Grace was at the foundations of the Old Testament believer's universe. The God whom he knew and worshipped was a God who created because He loved and desired an answering love. To win this He is ready Himself to suffer with them. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."¹ There is something much more here than the Artist's delight in His creation, there is the Father's sympathy with His children. Now it was unthinkable that, with a

¹ Isa. lxiii. 9.

profoundly moral conception of God like this, the growing spirit of the Hebrew people should be permanently contented with its earlier belief that the grace of God was for His people alone. Lifted and carried beyond themselves by their growing faith in God, the greater prophets looked forward to a world-wide salvation when "the earth should be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." But that, as the prophet Jeremiah saw, implied a new Covenant.

Three things, we can see now, were essential for the universalising of the faith of Israel.

First: the widening and clearing of the whole thought of God; second: the universalising of the Covenant of Grace; and, thirdly: a power which could set every human soul into such immediate relations with the living God that such a soul could be made aware of God and of what God desired him to be and do. These are the three new and essential things which were all given in Jesus Christ, and in the coming of the Spirit, and which transformed the Old Covenant into the New, by the creative grace of God. Taken together they define, I believe, for us the substance of the Christian faith, which is the subject of this closing lecture.

I have used this familiar phrase, "the substance of the faith," simply because I have been unable to find one more expressive. But, in truth, in this connection the word "substance" is a misleading term unless we define further what we mean. To the ordinary reader it suggests a material reality, a thing, and this, when applied to something which is alive, is obviously inappropriate. The substance

of a human body is dead matter; but you cannot explain an organism in terms of the stuff of which it is composed. To the philosopher the term at once suggests "substance and accident," the distinction between what matters and what does not matter. Now, there are many things in our faith that may not be at the focal centre that we believe to be of grave moment. Yet, surely, if we are to be true to realities we need some distinction between what in our faith is absolutely central and what is not. What I am seeking to set forth here are these central truths which, to use a word familiar to those who know the Church history of Scotland, used to be quaintly called "the marrow of modern divinity," and the dialectic theology in Germany to-day, following Luther, calls "the Word of God," and we call "the Gospel," the very heart of the Revelation. The word Gospel, as we know, means the "Good News of God," and as I understand the matter, the very substance of the faith is all concerned with God, as He is described in the threefold name: Father, Son and Spirit, or, to use Johannine language, Christ as the Truth, the Way and the Life. I shall begin, then, this brief endeavour to state the substance of the faith, with the new revelation of God, the truth about God as revealed in Jesus Christ. We shall not be concerned in what follows with the doctrinal controversies about the person of Christ or the Trinity, which followed the New Testament age, and were finally stratified in the Catholic creeds of Christendom. We shall be concerned rather with the protoplasm which vertebrated itself in these controversies into the

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

authoritative dogma, the intuitions and values of faith rather than the formulæ of theology. If the conclusions reached in this lecture are sound they must of course lead to a definite theology, but such a theology lies outside the plan of these lectures. Here we are in quest of that which lies behind all the Christian creeds, the new world of experience and revelation which finds expression in the earliest Christian literature. It will not, I think, be possible to avoid some repetition here of what has been said or implied in earlier lectures, but I shall endeavour to set such repetition in the light of their new context in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

I

As we have seen, the first essential for a new and universal covenant with the human race was the new disclosure of God in the teaching and in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament name for God is no longer Jahweh or Elohim or Adonai : it is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God is He whom Jesus Christ habitually spoke of as "the Father" or "My Father." The parable of the Prodigal Son is a clear proof that our Lord believed in the Divine Fatherhood of God over sinful humanity as such. The parable, be it remembered, was spoken to the Pharisees, who regarded the publicans and sinners as outcasts and "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," men and women outside the covenant, who, being apostates, were even as heathen. The point of the parable lies in its universalism as against their narrowness. It is, in effect, a picture

of the universal Father. The name which Jesus so frequently used for God, "the Father," it may fairly be argued, has, also, this wider reference.

Thus the term "Father" describes what God is in Himself. It does not concern merely His relation to men, but it declares His very nature and that which lies behind all relationships.¹ In the Gospels the Fatherhood of God is, as it were, spoken of by our Lord in three concentric relationships. The intensest and innermost circle of light is our Lord's own consciousness of God as His Father. It is manifest from the new material brought by the science of religion from all quarters of the world and all ages of time that no other human being has ever approached Jesus Christ in this consciousness of God as Father. The labours of a century of scholarship have familiarised all students of the theme with the story of human religion. We possess secure and abundant knowledge from the monuments and the temples, the papyri, the parchments and the books, how far men at their highest have really got in knowledge of and intimacy with the Sovereign Unseen Power. And we know with security that something absolutely new emerges here in history in this man of Nazareth. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son." That is a unique saying. He does not say "No man knoweth God save the Son." That would be to deny the truth of the Old Testament revelation. What He does say is that He alone has a deeper secret, the essential Fatherhood of the Sovereign Power. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah were in the outer courts.

¹ Gilbert, "Fatherhood of God," in *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. i, p. 580.

He has come forth from the holiest of all. We shall be wholly unjust to the testimony of the Gospels if we fail to recognise that Jesus Christ always speaks of God as His Father in this peculiar sense. He has an original filial consciousness. But it is equally clear that He desires to communicate the filial life to humanity. His followers are to win it and are to "make disciples of all nations," that is to say, lead them into the filial life which He Himself lived. All this is clear to the students of our Lord's teaching who will give their plain meaning to His sayings. These taken together imply the universal Fatherhood of God.

But we have something more impressive even than verbal teaching in the personality of Jesus Christ. We have here a human life wrought out in every detail in conformity with the Fatherhood of God. There is a curious blindness as to this among some to-day. They fail to see how deeply rooted both the character and the teaching of Jesus are in His conception of God. Mr Middleton Murry, for instance, has written one book about *Jesus of Nazareth* and another book about *God*. The first is full of fine and eloquent appreciation of Jesus and His moral teaching. The latter shows plainly that he rejects entirely His revelation of the Father. But in fact the two are inseparable. If Jesus Christ was wrong in His representation of God, then the kind of life that He expected of His disciples is not admirable at all. If the great universe is not controlled by the Almighty Father, then the incessant demands for faith which Jesus makes are unreasonable and misleading.

The true disciple is to be free from anxious care, he is to be disinterested in his service of God and man, he is to live in prayer, drawing his strength to love and serve from communion with His Father, who is Himself the great Lover and source of all love. He is to be perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect. Instead of being self-centred we are to be centred in God. But the nerve of the whole ideal of character is that we may absolutely trust the Father to care for us better than we can care for ourselves. It is as men grow in that faith that anxious care and fear fade out, and they are able to give themselves away in love and service, and the new type of character, humility, disinterestedness and love, comes in. Strike away that basis of faith in the Father and the whole type of character becomes foolish and visionary because out of touch with reality, and Jesus appears "a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." If Jesus was wrong about the Almighty Father, then His whole conception of what men and women ought to be was mistaken. We may for a while believe and say that it is a noble and beautiful ideal, but, severed from their roots in faith, love and hope of the Christian type must soon wither and die out of the world, and pity and resignation take their place. If Christ's demand for faith is unreasonable, the whole type of character becomes unreasonable as well. If on the other hand we hold fast to love and hope as Christ conceived them, if we see in Him a real embodiment of what we ought to be, then sooner or later we must accept His revelation of the Divine

Fatherhood.¹ We cannot take Christ as Lord, we cannot even take Him as Leader without taking the "Father" with Him. The two are inseparable.

By calling God "the Father" our Lord plainly had the analogy with human fatherhood in His mind. He obviously means every human being to understand that human fatherhood was the likeliest thing the world could offer to the nature of God. Nor are the points of similarity hard to discover. They are three in number: origin, loving care and kinship of nature. We need not linger on the first as it is the most obvious. The second is that most frequently taught by our Lord, and very many illustrations of this might be given. The parable of the Prodigal Son; the repeated assurances in the Sermon on the Mount that our Heavenly Father numbers the very hairs of our heads, that He knows our needs and will care for them, so that we need not be anxious; and the passage in Luke xi. where the analogy between human fatherly solicitude and the divine care rises to a climax in the closing sentence, "If ye, then, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good gifts," not simply to members of the chosen race, but "to them that ask him," are sufficient to bring home the conviction that God in His love and care for His human family deeply resembles man at his best. The third element, "kinship of

¹ There is a close parallel here with the relationship between the moral imperative which we saw to carry in the heart of it assurance of the nature of Reality, and the underlying New Testament conviction that men ought to believe in Christ's revelation of the Father. There can be no such obligation in either case, and no sin in "unbelief" if the corresponding revelation is untrue.

nature," is simply an extension of the second. It has its roots like the other deep in the Old Covenant. We find it in the Creation narrative, where it is said that God made man in His own image, an image which, though injured, remained undestroyed by the Fall. The conception runs all through the Old Testament. Indeed the Old Testament is far more disposed to read God in terms of man, is far more anthropomorphic than the New. But as the religion develops these excrescences are dropped. The kinship between man and God is more deeply understood. It is seen to be one of the Spirit, and not of bodily form or natural temperament.

There is at the moment a phrase in common use in our theology which seems to me clean against the teaching of Scripture. It is said that God is "wholly other" than man. However well intentioned this phrase may be as a protest against presumptuous glorifying of man, after the fashion of Humanism, it is yet misleading. If God is "wholly other" than man then He must be wholly unknowable by man. The phrase is one of these rhetorical exaggerations that may easily become dangerous when they become lodged in general usage.

But the soul of Hebrew religion in its noblest manifestation in the prophets asserts this kinship in all those utterances of faith which assert the righteousness and grace of God. To assert these is to carry human values into the very heart of the universe, to proclaim that "That which sits dark at the centre" behind Orion and the Pleiades and the Bear, that Sovereign Dweller in the Innermost is deeply akin to man and can be known and wor-

shipped by man, not merely because of His awful might but because, judged by the standards of men, He is just and good. That is precisely what makes the difference between the Upanishads and the Vedanta on the one hand and Hebrew prophecy on the other. Indian thought believes that Brahman is "wholly other" than man, beyond good or evil. But there is no reason why we who hold another faith should so state the transcendent moral perfection of God. He is only "wholly other" in the sense that He is greater, mightier and better than we can conceive, and therefore that we can never trust Him enough. But if He is really the "wholly other" in any other sense, we can never trust Him at all. All these elements of likeness between the human and the Divine Fatherhood are thus present in the Old Testament. In the psalmists and the prophets we find occasional references to God as the Father of Israel, and once or twice of his Fatherhood of the Messiah, as the representative of Israel, but Jesus Christ alone made the name both individual and universal, and revealed to every man that he may look up into the face of God and say "My Father."

I believe then that we can only understand the human life of Jesus and His plan for the salvation of the human race by realising that for Him the first thing that He had to do was to change their whole conception of God and to lead them into the heart of His own life in the Father. Unbelief in the Father was the dark road of sin and sorrow and all the human tragedy. That seems clear from His perpetual insistence on faith. What is the substance of His teaching about the Kingdom of

God? Is it not, to begin with, that in Him the life of heaven has come down to men in principle already, and with it an end of sin and tragedy, if men will only lay hold of it and realise the filial life by faith, hope and love? God has given the Kingdom, it is for them to take it. At last, when He sees that they will not take it yet, He assures them that God will bring it none the less, that its final victory is sure, and goes on through His death and resurrection and the coming of the Spirit to prepare the way for the final victory of the Kingdom of the Father. He had fulfilled His vocation to the uttermost. He had made His life so massively and completely filial that none who came under its spell could ever afterwards think of God save as "the Father." But if they think of Him as the Sovereign Father, they must think of the whole end of Creation and Providence as being Fatherly, the creation of a world of spirits for communion with God. They must also think of men as made in God's image for His purpose of love. They must think of them, therefore, as sacred. This will inevitably bring them up against the reality of sin. There can be no talk of sin where there is no moral standard or divine image in man, no shadow unless there is a light to cast it. Hence He who conceived us nobly of mankind and their destiny is He who speaks most plainly about sin. Thus from the truth of the Divine Fatherhood there radiates a doctrine of man. From it there inevitably arises a doctrine also of the world of Nature as a system of order and purpose in the great whole.

Thus the most characteristic principles of the Hebrew Apologia, of which I have spoken in the

last lectures, are taken up into the new doctrine of God. But they come to us, as it were, passed through the mind of Christ and transmuted by His Spirit.

II

So far I think there will be broad general agreement as to the substance of the faith by all who desire to call themselves by the Christian name. But at this point deep and wide divergences begin to appear between what we may call Modernist or Liberal theology and that interpretation which is common alike to Catholic and Evangelical theology. I am not thinking here mainly of the cleavage between them on what is known as the "miraculous" or "supernatural" elements in the New Testament revelation. Many, as is well known, have felt this "miraculous" element to be a great burden on their faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have endeavoured to simplify that faith by discarding all narratives of the "miraculous" as mythical or legendary. I have discussed this whole question of the "miraculous" element in the Gospels in a volume¹ published some years ago, and as I have seen no reason to modify, in any material way, the views there expressed, I do not propose to travel farther in the matter at present. I would only say in passing that in my judgment the real difference between the Humanitarian view and the view there expressed, lies in the fundamental conception of Nature. The Humanitarian holds that Nature is a rigid system of natural uniformities which can be completely calculated by mathe-

¹ *The Faith that Rebels*, Student Christian Movement Press.

matical methods. I believe that that is an abstract account of the world of Nature, that every abstract account, in the very nature of the case, ignores the opulent individuality and freedom which are present in Nature as in human life, and that Nature has in it potentialities of life and beauty which can respond to the touch of the spiritual Master of Nature, as the keys of a musical instrument respond to the genius of a musician. You and I can perhaps do very little with the instrument beyond class exercises, but the great artist can make it speak with the tongues of men and of angels. The "miracles" of Jesus, and, above all, His resurrection, to me, at least, reveal new things in the depth and wonder of the world, and the greatness and love of Him who created and sustains and works through it. But far graver than the difference between the Humanitarian view and the Catholic and Evangelical belief in the "miraculous," is that to which we must now approach.

Consistent Humanitarians, as has been said in the earlier lectures, see in Jesus Christ only the last and greatest of the prophets, who completed the line of Hebrew prophecy, and read the riddle of the world by discovering the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, and at last died for His conception of God. It is, as we have seen, not a little thing to have got so far as that in our difficult age. Yet is it really true to the facts of history, and does it meet the deepest needs of the human spirit?¹ We

¹ We are able now to raise this latter question without being open to the charge of "wishful thinking," for we have, I believe, given solid grounds for believing that the universe is an intelligible and spiritual order, controlled by the Sovereign God. In such an order we have the right to assume that man's moral necessities are a clue to Reality.

cannot here go into the first of these questions, except to say that it implies so forcible a handling of the data in the Gospels that it is not surprising that the question, "Did Jesus ever live?" had for a time a very considerable vogue. And the whole development of apostolic thought about Jesus Christ, as we find it laid bare in the Epistles, is quite different from what, on the Humanitarian view of Him, we should have expected from the disciples of so great a teacher. On that view the whole stress of their thought should have been directed to the subjects of His teaching, the Divine Fatherhood and human Brotherhood, rather than that they should dwell with "noxious exaggeration" on the personality of their Master and on the Holy Spirit of God. For, still on the Humanitarian view, these are false tracks of thought and devotion, like the later adoration of the Virgin and the saints. The vital point here is that in this simplification of the full Christian conception of Jesus Christ, Humanitarianism, without intending to do so, greatly impoverishes the whole Christian conception of God. What did we see to have been the end of all the earlier revelation, but the bringing all mankind into communion with God, the creation of a true household and family of God?

The weakness of all mere Humanitarianism and "philosophical Theism," however devout and intellectually satisfying it may be as compared with all other philosophies, is the extraordinary difficulty of sinful, finite and mortal men coming into any real intimacy of communion with God at all. Yet Theism can only endure as a philosophy if it can

vindicate itself as a life. Two great barriers stand in the way: the bad conscience and the weakness and finitude of mortal man. No morally sane man is wholly at ease with his own conscience. How then can he be at home with the Omniscient and Almighty One who speaks in the imperatives of conscience? And if he cannot be at home with God, how can he have communion with Him?

The other barrier, which has become much higher and harder to cross in our own day than in any other age, is that caused by the unimaginably great disparity between God and man. Science has shown that the universe is incomparably vaster in space and time than our forefathers knew. Its Author and Sustainer and Sovereign, therefore, is greater than prophet or apostle ever dreamed. But that removes God farther from us. If it is difficult for a plain man to be at home with a king, how much more with the King of kings! If a psalmist within his little home-farm of a cosmogony, looking up to the starry vault which to him was the roof of the world, could say, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him?" what are we to say, for whom the boundaries of stellar space and time have so widened as to make our planet like a mote in the sunlight? The communion of man with the Creator of that unimaginably great universe seems to many a modern man like a foolish childish dream. I think that no one who thinks deeply at all can to-day possibly escape facing these two deep hesitations of the human spirit when invited to commune with God.

(1) Let us consider them both carefully. As regards the former, it may be said that the psalmists knew nothing of the "incarnation," that they were one and all simple monotheists, and yet that they and the prophets gloriously surmounted the gulf set up by man's sinfulness between them and the purity of God. But surely the obvious truth is that these Old Testament men were not simple theists at all. They were in a radically different position from modern Humanitarianism. The fact is that the entire religious life of the Old Testament is based upon the rooted conviction of every true Israelite that Almighty God had, after a quite unprecedented and unique fashion, approached His people and entered into covenant relations with them. This Divine initiative lies at the foundation of everything distinctive in the life and thought of Israel.

I write these lectures in the heart of a city where every structure is made of granite. The dwelling-houses, the municipal buildings, the monuments, the pavements, the harbours are all fashioned of the grey enduring stone. The very soil is triturated granite. It conditions everything in the life of the people in the valley and regions from which the city draws its population: the harvests, the forests, the climate, the quality of the water and even the air. Moreover the very struggle to master and utilise the qualities of the stone and the soil has profoundly influenced the character of the people.

Now what the granite is to the appearance and the life of this region the historical Covenant of Grace with Israel was to the life of the chosen

people. It underlay everything else, land, law, sacrifice, prophecy and kingship. The land was given them by the grace of God. They had to fight for it, but they believed they were fighting for what was their own by the grace of God. The Law was the way of life and worship, fitting those who were under grace. Guilt offerings were grace ordinances for the acknowledgment and "covering" of sins against the Covenant and its laws; the prophets were God's messengers sent to recall people to the obligations of the Covenant and to remind them of its promises. The kings were God's chosen and ordained servants and vicegerents for security and order in the life of the covenanted folk, and so on. Every Israelite awoke each day to the sense that he was within the grace of the God who had approached and called and pledged His people to live within His grace and for His service alone. He lived, as it were, among sacraments, within a grace world, a peculiar world of the manifested favour and love of God, an environment that he could always take for granted and on which he could build his own life and fortunes. He had not to win it by his own deserts, it was his secure inheritance as an Israelite. This is the background of the entire life and thought of the Old Testament. We may say that it was a complete illusion, or we may, with the Israelite, believe that there was a real Covenant of Grace between God and man. But whether it were a true or false belief there can be no doubt at all that every psalmist and prophet believed it, and this faith is the explanation of the extraordinary intimacy and confidence with which they speak of God. That there is nothing whatever correspond-

ing to this in modern Humanitarian Theism is too obvious for argument. Furthermore, to understand the full range of this Old Testament conception we must not think of it as a simple bargain or contract between God and man. Such bargains are not unconditional. If one party breaks the bargain the other considers himself as released from any obligation. But, to the Hebrews, God, in His grace, had chosen Israel once for all, had pledged Himself to be to His people all that a God could be, and had called it in implicit faith on that promise to give itself wholly to Him. Faith in that faithfulness and constancy to that Covenant lie behind both the persistent belief of the prophets that in the end God's cause would triumph, even though it might be only through a faithful "remnant," and in the unconditional demand for obedience to the divine commands, though everything should be sacrificed save loyalty alone. Such, then, was the faith of ancient Israel, and such the place in its life of the Covenant of the Grace of God. Such was the way, too, in which the ancient Israelite overcame the guilt consciousness. "I will believe in the mercy of God," said the psalmist, "for ever and ever." When he knew that he had gravely offended there was the grace institution of sacrifice, whereby God "covered" his sin. But so long as he was in the nation whom God in His grace had chosen to be His own he lived in the world of grace and knew that God Himself had bridged the gulf between His purity and man's sin, that He loved him and needed him and had taken, and was taking, the initiative of grace with him. Now it is, of course, impossible for us to-day

to go back to that Old Covenant, and I dwell upon it now only by way of leading up to the New, and bringing out the deep difference between modern Humanitarian Theism and the full New Testament faith. Under merely "Humanitarian Theism," with Christ as our leader and example only, we can, I believe, reach a reasoned conviction that the universe is spiritual and that it has its source and purpose in a pure eternal Mind. But what of communion with that Perfection? That must be reduced for most people, it appears to me, to human striving after that which is dim and afar, clouded in all sensitive minds by a sense of their unworthiness and failure, yet possessing occasional high moments of insight. That this is much, and that it has sustained fine and generous minds, we may gladly admit. But that it is really communion with God in the full New Testament sense we must as certainly deny. What makes the difference? In the end, and this is of capital importance, the difference is due to a different and, I cannot help feeling, a greatly impoverished conception, not simply of Jesus of Nazareth, but of Almighty God.

What is the radical difference between the two conceptions? It is, as I have said, the difference between the God who waits and the God who comes. The universe before which, in the years of the dawn of the Christian Church, the men who wrote the New Testament stood, was not for them the same old cosmos as that before which the prophets stood, illuminated more fully by the last and greatest of them. It was a cosmos indefinitely changed and transformed by a new emergence within it of God Himself, a new initiative from the eternal

world of the grace of God. What they tell us about with amazement and gratitude, is not, first of all, that they have discovered new truths, but that something new has *happened*, which for them has transfigured not only the past, but the present and the future. Of course, therefore, it has brought with it new truth about the old world, but that is not the primary thing. The primary thing is something new and creative. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" by taking a new initiative towards the whole human race. What was the nature of that initiative? In exploring its meaning we cannot do better than take the clue given us by Jesus Christ Himself, in those few words which He spoke before the last supper: "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is shed for the many for the remission of sins." The speaker was obviously thinking of the historic scene at Mount Sinai when the institution of the Old Covenant took outward form, and according to the Hebrew fashion was ratified by a solemn sacrifice. The New Covenant is no longer with one little nation: it is, in the Divine intention, with all mankind. The essential thing in it is that it is God who makes it. How profoundly important for the possibility of man's communion with God this is, an illustration may make clear.

A great personality appears in our time, let us suppose, as Gautama appeared in Benares or Socrates in Athens, and his words and deeds awaken the deep admiration and trust of some obscure youth who greatly desires his friendship, but who, conscious of his own obscurity and un-

worthiness, shrinks from seeking the fellowship of one so much greater and better than himself. He may secure an interview with him. But an interview with him is not a friendship, and so long as the initiative lies wholly with the seeker it cannot grow into one, for he is bearing the whole burden of it, and the finer his own nature the more acutely conscious of this will he be, and the less able to be his true self in the presence of the other. But the whole situation becomes radically transformed from its very foundations when the greater takes and keeps the initiative with the less, and with patient and disinterested kindness bears with him and continues to seek his friendship. Still more is this the case when in spite of grievous offences against friendship the greater persists in seeking the less, and carries in long-suffering generosity the whole burden of the initiative. Now just as we have seen that the covenant of God's grace to Israel underlies everything distinctive in the life of Israel, so it is this deeper initiative of God's grace that in the same way lies behind the entire thought and life of the earliest Christian Church, as it is mirrored in the Acts, Epistles and Apocalypse. The absolutely vital point is that "God was in Christ," beginning a new covenant and life of intimacy with the human race, "mankind, sinners as such" as the old theologians said. Now this is quite a different conception from that of Jesus as the discoverer of new truths about the old cosmos of Nature and humanity. It tells, if I may speak paradoxically, of a cosmic change, and a new environment for humanity. Men may make even the sub-polar regions more habitable for humanity

by flooding the Arctic darkness and cold with incandescent electric light and heat, and so can make isolated spots habitable for man. They can do that of themselves by a new human research and technique. One may compare that to what can be achieved by man struggling up to God through an unchanged cosmos. But what would that be in comparison with an astronomical change which flooded these icy zones with light and warmth, not from the earth but from the heavens, and so set free the latent energies of organic life in tropical opulence and splendour?

Something like this is what we find in the New Testament, and it explains and justifies the intense interest of the early disciples in the personality of Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Of the latter element in the substance of the Christian faith we shall speak presently. Meanwhile we shall confine ourselves to the former. Harnack, in his book *What is Christianity?* has said that the substance of the first Gospel was the Kingdom of God, God the Father, and the higher righteousness, and that "the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it has to do with the Father only and not with the Son." I do not think that the rest of that most attractive book is at all consistent with this saying. It is one of other inconsequences which may perhaps be attributed to its extempore form. It is plainly inconsistent with the passage in the Synoptic Gospels which Harnack accepts as genuine: "no one knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him," and that it would have been repudiated by the entire early Church seems to me too plain from the Acts of the Apostles and the

apostolic writers generally, to need detailed discussion. It was primarily in the personality of Jesus Christ that the first disciples discerned God. Through the Son they saw the Father and became aware of the new initiative of which I have spoken and of the essential nature of the new epoch or Kingdom of Heaven or God.

If Jesus does not belong to the heart of His own Gospel, then who was He? Leader but not Lord. If not Lord then certainly not God. But if not God, what? A prophet? But He certainly claimed that His forerunner was "more than a prophet," and said that before His own judgment-seat "all nations would be gathered." A demigod? That would be to say that He was neither God nor man. In that case what would become of His full revelation value? "It is a weary way to God, but a wearier far to any demigod." The moment we raise these questions we get into the centre of that tumult of thought about Jesus which we find in the first Christian centuries, which reached a definite stage in the creed of Nicæa. It runs right back, however, into the apostolic age. We see Paul using one idea after another, current in the thought of his time, to explain to the earliest communities who Jesus was. He and every other New Testament writer start from the assurance that He was the Messiah or Christ. The Humanitarian conception of Him as a prophet would obviously have been thought by him to be inadequate. To every true Jew the Messiah was He who "completed the history of the world" by bringing in complete and final salvation. But even this did not satisfy Paul. He goes on to speak of

Him as "the second Adam," then as "the Man from Heaven," and then, though he does not use the word, the Logos, before all worlds and all angels, and then as being "on an equality with God." It is, I think, quite clear what is the motive that drives him on. It is the fundamental Christian faith that in Jesus Christ in some absolutely unique fashion we have the new initiative of God, opening for mankind a new possibility of communion with Himself. To reduce the Gospel to the teaching of a man about God is, therefore, to reduce the very substance of the faith. However we or after ages may formulate it, the Gospel is the advent of God to man in Jesus Christ His Son. Here, and here alone, I believe, can we transcend that disastrous dilemma of the soul into which we come when we think our way to God along the lines of Humanitarian Theism alone. The only God that to-day is worth believing in, or that it is possible to believe in, is He in whom supreme reality and sovereignty, and also absolute moral purity, are identified. But how is communion with such an One possible to sinful man?

(1) There is a profound tension here between the moral and the religious nature of man, and surely there must be a deep disquiet even in the spirits of the purest when they realise the human situation. There is a gulf between God and man that cannot be bridged from the human side, for the strait seems to widen as we build the piers. I do not see how it can be bridged at all except from the side of God. That is the great Christian story of the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, something coming from a depth in God beyond all

normal human expectation of ordinary justice or even ordinary love. "He that has not seen the grace of God as a wonder has never seen it at all." When one has seen God in Christ after this fashion, especially in the climax of His manifestation in the Cross, enduring the whole violence of human malignity and unbelief, bearing the burden and the consequence of sin, deeply measuring it and appraising it, and yet forgiving it, one can wholeheartedly believe in the forgiving grace of God.

Something new passes into the conception of God through the Incarnation and the Cross which was not there before, and with the God so revealed it is possible even for sinful men and women to enter into communion. How can it be otherwise when He seeks me, after this fashion, morning, noon and night? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open the door I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."

(2) The other great barrier between man and God to which I have referred is that caused by the insignificance of man and the greatness of God. To-day that barrier seems far higher than it used to be. Undoubtedly the only God in whom it is possible for an educated man or woman to believe is a very great God. Science has given us quite new conceptions of the magnitude and wonder of the universe, and this seems not only to have enhanced the greatness of its Creator, but has dwarfed the importance of man. The gulf between creature and Creator has never seemed so great or so hard to cross, and this has not only made it more difficult for man to hold communion with God, but to many it seems impossible to believe

that God could ever become man. Faith has endeavoured to bridge that gulf by dwelling on the difference in quality between man and Nature. It has followed the line of Pascal in his famous simile of the "thinking reed" which is greater in kind than the mighty universe which cannot think. I believe that to be a sound and true argument, and have followed it out in the earlier lectures of this volume. But I would follow another line of thought here in the completion of that argument, and try in thought to approach the gulf from the other side. What is the reasoning which leads to the conclusion that it is less possible to believe in the Incarnation because of our new knowledge of the greatness of God? There is surely something unsound about the argument that because we must own that God is a far mightier and wiser being than men used to think Him, therefore He must be more commonplace in His moral character. The only God that it is possible to believe in to-day, or that is worth believing in, is, as I have said, He who combines supreme power and reality with moral perfection. But Jesus Christ has made it impossible for us to conceive of moral perfection save in terms of pure and holy love. But love in its very nature always implies service and sacrifice. Take these out of it and you destroy it.

Is not love always creative? Love of beauty leads to the creation of every beautiful thing. The love of truth creates discovery and knowledge. Human love, desiring more love, creates the family, and is always seeking the fuller perfection of being of those whom it loves. If that be so, then surely in the Cross and Passion of our Lord we have

revealed the very mainspring of all creation, "the love which moves the sun and all the stars." Thus the Cross is not departing in the light of modern knowledge, it is coming back again! It is able to hold its own not only with "Orion and the Pleiades and the Bear," but with the whole galactic universe, with the abysses of time disclosed by geological science and with all the amazing world of animate Nature. Even as these are divine splendours in the world of Nature, so this is a divine splendour in the world of the soul. The new knowledge gives it a better frame.

The truth is that the intimidation which many in our day feel at the terrifying vastness of the universe is an instinctive rather than a reasoned mood. If we yield to it—and who among us has not felt its force?—we must abandon not only faith in the Incarnation, but faith in the worth and importance of humanity and in any deep distinction between bulk and quality of being, between things material and things spiritual. It leads straight to ultimate negation, therefore, of all that is finest and best in human life, for unquestionably the salt of civilisation lies in our conviction of the sacredness of human personality over against mere brute magnitude and power. The whole of the earlier argument of this book turned on whether the world were fundamentally material or spiritual. If that argument were sound there is no reason for spiritual beings to be intimidated by the sheer vastness of the physical universe, for all things material are of a lower kind in worth than what is spiritual.

But if God has thus in His greatness and sovereign grace approached all men in Christ, and has made,

and is still making, all the advances to us, who are we that we should say Him "nay"? "All our communion with God rests upon His communion with us." All is of His grace revealed in the Incarnation and Atoning Passion of His Son. That is the basal truth of the New Testament revelation.

III

Is that, then, a complete account of the substance of the Christian faith in God? Whatever we may feel about that to-day, it seems clear to me that the New Testament age would certainly have said that it was not. That is sufficiently obvious from the place which the Holy Spirit has in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Apocalypse.

In these writings generally, the Spirit is thought of not as a subjective condition of the human mind, but as a Divine Influence producing such thoughts and emotions and volitions of men as are like the "mind of Christ." It is a Divine Power rather than a human state. In the Synoptic Gospels it is spoken of as enabling Christ to do His great deeds. But it is not confined to these. All the Synoptic Evangelists begin their story of the active ministry of Jesus with His baptism by the Spirit. Then follows the history of the unique life, death and resurrection. The underlying idea is obviously that its wonder is all due to its unique possession by the Spirit of God. God Himself is fashioning this life of beauty and wonder, sustaining and guiding this man on this new plane of character and blessing, as He moves among His fellow-men.

By the continued reception of this Spirit He lives and works, and this highest endowment is meant not only for Himself, but for all who will follow Him. Anyone according to his human measure may have it from God who will!

When we pass from the Synoptic Gospels to the Acts we find at the very beginning the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost taking the same determining place as the Baptism by the Jordan takes in the Gospels. In the former case it is as if the writers said, "This is what the Spirit enabled this man to be." In the latter case, it is as if the author said, "This is what baptism by the Spirit enabled the Church to be." In strict conformity with this idea throughout the whole of the Acts we find the Spirit leading and guiding and empowering the Church and its members, as "the new race" enters into its inheritance and the Gospel moves on from Jerusalem to Antioch and Rome.

The Spirit is prominent in nearly all the New Testament writings, but it is not too much to say that the Pauline Epistles in particular are permeated throughout by the thought of the Spirit. Short as they are the Spirit is referred to in them about 120 times. In the Fourth Gospel, which comes at the end of the apostolic period, we find, in our Lord's farewell discourse, the promise that the "Comforter" or Holy Spirit will be given, as the climax to which all the rest leads up. That Comforter will convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, and He will illuminate for the disciples all that the Son has said to them. He will not only call to their remembrance all that He has said and interpret it, but He will add to

the things that He did say things that He did not say because they were not ready for them. Of such supreme value will the coming of the Spirit be to them that it is well worth while that they should lose His human presence that the Spirit may come instead. That surely is a remarkable proof of the worth of the Spirit in the first Christian age. It is the positive estimate of that worth, as the declaration that the sin against the Holy Spirit is the supreme sin is the measure of its loss.

Such then is the New Testament belief in the Holy Spirit. The Modernist theology, which is most deeply influenced by continental thought, makes little or no use of it in its endeavour to restate the Christian faith. Its two greatest representatives in Germany, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, reduce it to that knowledge of God which has been given to us by the Jesus of history and is maintained in the Church or community of Jesus, and transmitted by Christian education and example to each generation. When anyone fully and consciously appropriates it or reaches some deeper understanding of it he receives the Spirit of God, for he knows the truth and the truth sets him free. But the divine action is reduced to the giving of the revelation at the first. There is no ever-living Spirit of God contemporary, as it were, with every generation, and continually creative in the world, intervening in crises of the human soul and sustaining the new life in each disciple, such as is quite obviously believed in by all the New Testament writers. Now it is possible to use a good deal of New Testament language about the Holy

Spirit on this reduced view, for it does represent a real though partial truth. The Spirit, as it were, does dwell in the Word, so that he who will honestly receive the Word into his heart cannot but receive the Spirit with it. Yet to confine the Spirit to the effect of the Gospel on the mind of men, that is to say, to reduce it from a creative power of God to a state of the human consciousness, represents a great reduction of the New Testament conception for the simple reason that it greatly reduces the activity of God in the life of man, and that is surely to banish from human life much of its power and hope. Can we afford to lose it at any time—above all, can we afford to lose it to-day? I can imagine a man, compelled by the force of evidence or by some supposed inherent contradiction in his faith, sorrowfully abandoning belief in the Holy Spirit as something too good to be true, and turning to the dull prose of reality again to take up his burden because he must. But before he does this, I think he is bound to ask what are the compelling reasons which are believed to be valid for that renunciation. When we thus examine these reasons I think that they are four in number.

(1) The first is purely practical. We are repelled by extravagances of the weaker forms of evangelism, or the cruder forms of sacramentarianism, displayed in connection with their faith in the Holy Spirit. The one may confound certain plainly neurotic crises with the creative work of the Spirit of God and live in what we feel to be a pathological world, and the other may materialise and narrow the gift of the Spirit of the Living Christ out of all recognition. But that a great truth may be abused is

no valid reason for its rejection. Revulsion from extravagance may lead to extravagant moderation. "You pretend to extraordinary manifestations and gifts of the Holy Ghost. That is a very horrid thing!" said the Bishop of Bristol to John Wesley. These were two of the noblest men of their time, for though, for some unknown reason, Wesley's standard biographer, Tyerman, conceals the fact, the Bishop of Bristol of that day was none other than Joseph Butler himself, soon to be the author of the famous *Analogy*, while Wesley was then at the beginning of the greatest spiritual movement in England since the Reformation. The incident is a sharp reminder of the dangers of mere recoil. But it would be unfair to attribute that reduction of faith in the Spirit of God which prevails in our time to this alone. There are more deeply considered reasons.

(2) The first of these is the closed system idea of Nature. Modernism is an endeavour to restate the Gospel in terms of modern thought, and modern thought is deeply imbued with the working theory of science that the natural world is a closed system in which everything that happens can be fully explained, without going outside that system to seek for further grounds of explanation. I have already dealt with the conception in its most trenchant form of Naturalism. Modernism, of course, repudiates Naturalism, but has been deeply tinged by the Idealistic philosophy of the age, which, as Professor Whitehead has said, "swallowed the scientific scheme in its entirety as being the only rendering of the facts of Nature, and has thus explained it as being an idea in the ultimate

mentality." That is to say, the prevalent Idealism of the nineteenth century in effect said to the science of the day: "What you say about Nature is true so far as it goes, but it is only relative truth. The whole truth is that God or the Absolute is immanent in Nature, manifesting and realising Himself in the orderly course of the closed system. We leave you that closed system of Nature. It is your way of looking at it, convenient for your own purposes, and we do not ask you to change it, provided that you admit that Nature exists for Spirit, as a means to its realising of spiritual ends and that your account is set in this larger whole of the Immanent Spirit." In practice this vague concordat meant that the idealist philosopher, as a rule, discarded any such emergence from the heavenly world as the New Testament records, while the scientists in the main disregarded the idealist philosopher. For both alike the river of human history found its way to the sea, but there were no great tides from that ocean moving up the river, bringing depth and peace and majesty into its shrunken waters. To-day there is no disguising the fact that the semi-pantheistic system of Absolute Idealism no longer meets the deepest religious needs of our age, and it is also perfectly clear that it is not the faith of either Jesus Christ or the New Testament age. The faith of both is in a Father who is not only immanent in Nature and history, but transcendent and creative, and who freely moulds both, creating and regenerating human spirits in the fullest sense of the term. It is clear that we have here a faith that passes beyond what either Deism or mere Idealism of the religious

type can allow. To them the whole New Testament conception of a continuous interweaving of the powers of a heavenly world with this earthly world must be alien, for the full New Testament conception of the Spirit implies a world in which miracles of answered prayer, "guidances" by the Spirit of God, regeneration of the human spirit, and sustained reinforcement of the higher life are everyday experiences of the Christian community, and it seems impossible to reconcile these with "continuity," in other words, with the closed system of Nature or of history as viewed by the ordinary historian. The full New Testament idea of the Spirit inevitably carries with it "supernaturalism," and to this many minds, even to-day, are closed. In earlier lectures I have shown to what mutilation and distortions of fundamental moral and æsthetic values this obsession of the closed system leads, and have also endeavoured to show where the fallacy lies, and also that the most modern forms of philosophy are chafing under its restraints and breaking away from it in theories of "emergence" and "creative" evolution, and so I shall not retrace the general argument. But it is in place here to show that this obsession produces the same mutilation and distortion in the religion of the New Testament as it does when applied to the moral convictions and æsthetic values of the life of man.

When we turn from the life and death of Christ to the story of the founding of the Church and to Christian history since then we find the same mutilation. Either the story in the New Testament is true or it is not true. If it is true we

have an event of transcendent moment for the human race. If it is true, what are the facts? The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as it were, broke a great barrier that had risen up between the life of God and the life of man, and the floods of that divine life poured through. The creative Spirit of God came to mankind to complete the story of the creation of the heavens and the earth, and to change and regenerate the wandering race of men. We have here, according to the apostolic teaching, the climax of the Gospel history, the end for which Christ had come, and towards which He had been labouring and praying and healing and dying and rising again. The open secret of the New Testament experience is that these first believers believed that through the coming of this heavenly Power they were enabled to be in living communion with Christ still, so that not only they could speak to Him but, what was far more sensational, He could speak with them and they could be sure that it was He who spoke. It is only in the light of this belief that we can understand the rapid multiplication of the churches all round the Levantine coast lands, and through Greece to Rome. These were all, I take it, meant to be reproductions of the first circle of disciples with Christ still in the heart of each new community through His Spirit, and wherever they came life lost its commonplaceness, its tragedy and fear, its taint of sin and decay: new warmth and hope came into it, and a "new race," as they called themselves, came into being. The Book of the Acts is perhaps the most exhilarating book in the Bible, as that book ought to be which] tells of

the coming of the "Lord and Giver of Life" to mankind.

Now let us see what the "closed system" idea makes of all this. Over all rationalism writes the word "illusion." What had really happened was not the coming of God's spirit at all. It was simply an *émeute* of man's own subconscious mind in futile rebellion against the unchanging order of Nature: instead of being the climax it is the anti-climax. First came the Resurrection apparitions, and then at Pentecost another emotional cyclone which, strange to say, was the prelude to what, by universal consent, was an unprecedented awakening not only of religious faith but of moral power. Out of this fever marsh of neurotic extravagance there sprang the deep and pure river of the Christian life. We must of course apply the same interpretation to all supposed manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit all down through the Christian ages. This applies not only to supernormal events such as visions and healings and so forth, but to all "conversions" and "guidances" and apparent answers to prayer, by which strength to overcome temptation seemed to be given by God Himself. We have, that is to say, to dismiss from our thoughts of Christian experience in general any thought of a creative and sustaining intervention of the Spirit of God. The whole conception of God as causally active in the experience of man must be narrowed down to the historical period of Jesus of Nazareth, and to the educative influence of the Divine Providence which we experience as we pursue our way through the joys and sorrows of our human life. All the rest we do ourselves by putting forth faith and

practising duty, or else projecting from our subconsciousness on the screen of our conscious life. There is no Holy Spirit save as a state of the human mind. It is hardly necessary to point out how greatly this impoverishes the whole Christian conception of God, and how much barer it makes our human outlook upon the world. What has to be said upon this point must be reserved, however, until we have considered the third of the influences which in our day have tended towards this reduction of the New Testament teaching of the Holy Spirit.

(3) Yet another reason given by Liberal theology for the minimising of the Holy Spirit is that to admit such a transcendent divine influence working within the consciousness of man is to degrade the freedom of human personality, to consider man as a thing rather than a person. Personalities may be influenced profoundly by persuasion and reasoning and example, but to think even of God influencing them by His Spirit other than in this way would be an "impersonal" and "non-ethical" invasion of man's ethical freedom. You make the Spirit a force, it is said. But is not a force lower in the scale of being than an intelligence? To say, then, that the Spirit regenerates is to degrade the being who is "converted." Surely this is to take too narrow a view of the whole situation.

In the first place it is only too plain that human beings are not pure intelligences at all. A very large number of them are infants or children, or immature in development, and even when they are adult they are the prey of impulses that are anything but rational. Modern psychology has made it plain to how large an extent the will or "conation"

enters into all our thinking, and how, even in the highest ranges of the mind's working, its outlook is profoundly influenced by the infirmities or vices of the flesh and spirit. No human being is a mere thinking machine. The influences that arise from the subconscious regions even in the mind of the wisest philosopher pondering over the deepest mysteries are many and subtle. Now are we to say that this subconscious mind of man is impervious to any influence from the supraconscious universe, otherwise than through man's conscious appropriation of the truth? It is surely quite clear that this cannot be proved. If such intervention existed, far from degrading man it would, it seems to me, be the best of good news. For surely it would bring with it a new possibility of setting his reason free from a bondage that he knows to be a degradation.

Again, to say that to think of the Spirit of God as an "influence" is to make it a natural "force" is, for another reason, quite beside the mark. It has to be remembered that in the Bible the Spirit of God is always thought of as the creative source of the universe, not only of Nature, but of the entire range of human life. The Spirit is God in creative action creating the first chaos, brooding over it, and bringing out of it order and life, creating man in His own image, and when he wanders, restoring his soul. Not only the natural but the higher life in man is the work of the Divine Ruach or Spirit. Man's reason itself, then, is God's creation. But if the Spirit creates the reason why should it not renew and strengthen it? I entirely fail to see why if God can create a human being, and if that

should be a glorious thing, it should be considered a degradation to such a being that God should re-create him when he has ruined himself. The rationalist's way of thinking here seems to me to be quite divorced from reality.

(4) The final difficulty is certainly more serious, as it is certainly far older than any of those we have been considering above. Why, it is said, if God has this power of regenerating the human spirit in His hands, does He not use it more freely for the salvation of all? The answer to this ancient difficulty has been already implied in a preceding lecture. I believe that in creating free human spirits God has in the full sense of the term limited Himself. It is entirely possible to hold that the Divine Spirit can come to the help of the human, can regenerate and daily reinforce the spiritual life of man, and yet to believe that He has made that conditional on the free consent of that soul. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open the door I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me." To take that strain of thought out of the Bible or to fail to give it due force is certainly to tamper with the substance of the faith.

None, then, of the difficulties of Humanitarianism seem to me of any real substance or to give any reason for that reduction of the Spirit of God to a state of the human consciousness which has been so frequent in its version of Christianity. They seem to me to start from a one-sided conception of the Christian life as essentially a moral struggle, of which conception it is hardly a caricature to say that the soul says to God, "Let me alone! Let

me do it all by myself!" and, jealous of its own dignity as a personality, fights its own way through and thinks its own way out, in independence of the succouring and revealing Spirit of God. One is inclined to ask: "Supposing it did succeed would it not be a very complacent and finite little spirit that emerged from its long battle, a Stoic rather than a Christian soul, with all the limitations of the Stoic type, self-centred rather than God-centred and intolerant of weaker failures?"

As I read the New Testament the new nature in man is not fashioned by man himself, but by God, and man's chief concern is not to make himself in jealous independence of God, but to cease from hindering God from making of him what He will. God is, as it were, in action all the time, transforming men and women into the likeness of His Son, by the moulding influence of His Providence without and the "inspiration" of His Spirit from within. In other words the new man does not create himself: God creates him. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them." The metaphors here are mixed, but the thought is clear. The course is marked out, and the destined work prepared for us. That is God's Providence without us. The Spirit creates in us the new ideals, and gives us power to translate them into realities, and the Christian life is thus at every point not one of jealous independence lest God should help us too much, and so spoil our individuality, but one of habitual reliance on God's Providence and His Spirit. We cannot have too much surely of God, if He be truly the "First and only Fair."

Our whole danger lies in having too little of Him. This is certainly the Pauline conception of the Christian life, and I cannot see that there is any difference in the other apostolic writers, though the thought is most clearly formulated by Paul. The distortion of which I have spoken thus affects the whole conception of the Christian life. In the last resort it affects also the whole Christian idea of God. The full Christian idea of God, as we have already seen, is not that He is One who waits till men shall find Him out, but of One who comes, and who seeks and saves the lost. The fundamental religious weakness of rationalism is, as we have seen, that it denatures this forthcomingness of the grace of God Himself in the Incarnation and Passion. These become merely noble human achievements of the ideal man.

It is congruous with this that the conception of the Spirit should be reduced as well as the conception of the Son, and all the supposed phenomena of the spiritual life should become manifestations not of the power of God, but upheavals of the subconscious life of man. Conversely, if we believe in a true Incarnation of the Son, we must give its full New Testament meaning to the Spirit. Consider the position. God sends His Son to the world to be to each man a Revealer, Saviour and Lord, offering to every human being, through all future ages, the forgiveness of sins, and summoning them all to give themselves to Him as He has given Himself to them. But this message is embodied in the historical personality of Jesus Christ, His life, death and resurrection. Now for the contemporaries of Jesus Christ who had known

Him that personal manifestation might come with overwhelming force as if eternity had suddenly opened its heart to them. But can that experience be indefinitely repeated in all future ages and lands? The personality of Jesus is bound up with the period in history to which He belongs. To make Him real and vivid to ourselves to-day requires, as we know, a very real effort, for we have to transport ourselves back in imagination nearly two thousand years to re-create the environment and to translate the teaching into the terms of the life of our own age. What will men have to do in twenty thousand years or in a hundred thousand, if the world should last so long? The resistless flood of time is bearing us ever farther away from Calvary. Must not the image of Him who died on the Cross grow ever fainter and fainter as the distance increases, until He becomes only a faintly shining name like that of Isaiah of Jerusalem or some other of "the world's grey fathers"? History is a story of endless change, and the mere time process must wear down the finality and absoluteness of His historic manifestation.¹ Ten thousand years hence men may say

¹ That the prophetic religions greatly excel Nature religions in vividness and moral force history shows. But that they are apt to succumb to the time sequence and become transformed by it into something different the story of Buddhism, in particular, shows, where what is usually known to-day as Buddhism would hardly be recognised by its founder.

Mrs Rhys Davids has recorded an interview with a young Buddhist, which brings out with pathetic force the need for some living interpreter of a historical revelation.

"Many are now, I hear, speaking of him (*i.e.* the Buddha) as not above all one of the great Devas or gods, but as a man who may still be alive. Will the earth ever see another like him? We believe it will. Do you think there will be another Jesus? I wish there were a Maitreya (*i.e.* another Buddha) here now! I get weary of being told there is no way of getting word from him, to tell us much we want to know. . . . Sometimes, too, I think we want a helper who, when he leaves the earth

of our age: "Yes, it was still possible then to think of Jesus of Nazareth as Saviour and Lord, but to-day He is too far off and faint a figure for it to be possible for us." Roman Christianity has tried to bridge this gulf of time by the Church, but surely the Church alone cannot do it. The Church consists of fallible men like ourselves, and history shows that aggregates of men are too often less wise than the best individuals among them. The Roman Church, in fact, which claims infallibility claims it by virtue of its supposed peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit.

Surely what is needed if the Incarnation is to be for all peoples and all time is some new power of God Himself which can make the Jesus of history the eternal contemporary of every human soul. The gift of the Son would be incomplete without the gift of the Spirit. It is to me, therefore, inconceivable that Easter should have had no following Pentecost, inconceivable, that is to say, on the full Christian idea of God. We need the fulness of the New Testament idea of God, a divine initiative of the Father begun in the Son and continued and

will not let go of us. Perhaps it is not orthodox, do you call it? . . . Perhaps our Buddha did not want man to let him go into such utter blankness when he left the earth. . . . Christians tell me they can get near Jesus in the sacrament. But to me that seems just a matter of the body. They tell me also of a 'holy spirit' who will be our guide in what should be done, and that is a lovely idea. But I seem to want a helper who will give me more light just where the monks, as I was saying, do not. Our Buddha spoke of the good life as a way, and the monks teach it as an earth way—that is, how rightly to walk in this life. But then life, they say, is very, very long; and beyond this little bit of it we have no good way. We are in the dark. Don't you think the perfect teacher, the helper greater than the gods, would be always helping man—at least till they would themselves see with him the end of the long way approaching?"

(Account of an interview with a young Sinhalese Buddhist quoted in *Reports of Jerusalem Missionary Conference, 1928, vol. i, pp. 143-44.*)

pressed through by the coming and abiding of the Holy Spirit.

If we are to enter fully into the New Testament thought we have to think of this Spirit as being given by God not by fits and starts, now given and now withdrawn. Like God's Providence, rather, the Spirit is always there waiting for men to realise it. All the fluctuation in receptivity is in man, not necessarily only in the individual man, but in the social medium in which he lives as well as in himself, and man's supreme concern is to cease, and to persuade others to cease, from hindering the steady divine initiative of the Spirit of God.

We may put the matter in a figure and reinforce it by a passage from one of the great mystics. As the reader reads these words the North Sea is breaking on the dykes of Holland. All along these mighty ramparts incessant watch is being kept lest at any point they show signs of giving way before that relentless siege, and letting in the destroying waters to drown populous cities and quiet homesteads and to poison the fertile land. If we invert the figure we may have some conception of the New Testament thought of the Holy Spirit of God. Instead of a sea of death imagine a sea of life beating on the ramparts of human unbelief and selfishness, lust and pride, seeking to bring life and joy and beauty to the sinful spirits of men. Surely this is the conception of God that is alone consistent with the Incarnation. Without it the Incarnation is a broken fragment. The Spirit is the same initiative pressed through and continued from age to age in order to make that first initiative effectual and independent of historic time

and change. Let us hear Meister Eckhart on that revelation: "God is bound to act, to pour Himself out into thee as soon as He shall find thee ready. Think not it is with God as a human carpenter, who works or works not as he chooses, who can do or leave undone at his good pleasure. It is not so with God, but finding thee ready, He is obliged to act to overflow into thee; just as the sun must needs burst forth when the air is bright and clear, and is unable to contain itself. . . . Thou needst not seek Him here or there. He is not farther off than at the door of thine heart; there He stands lingering, awaiting whoever is ready to open the door and let Him in. Thou needst not call to Him afar. He waits much more impatiently than thou for thee to open to Him."¹

Can the world in these days dispense with the early faith that, given receptivity in the heart of man, there is no limit to the succour that can come to him from the Unseen? Why should we give up the faith that God still works mightily in the lives of men, still guides them in their perplexities by His Spirit, still from the inexhaustible springs of His grace regenerates and inspires their lives and reveals new depths in His gift of His Son? The truth is that never did the world need more the promise of the Spirit than it does to-day.

We have now completed our long argument which started from the fundamental riddle which faces every human being who is born into the world and who will face its experiences with courage and honesty, and we have endeavoured to

¹ Meister Eckhart, Sermon 4. Quoted in the anthology *The Heavenly Vision*. Published by Student Christian Movement Press.

set forth the solution in the full Christian revelation of God. That the answer still leaves mysteries unexplained we have no reason to deny, for, I repeat, it is unreasonable to expect that human beings so undeveloped and sinful as we are should have a complete solution. But we have light enough to be sure that a very great Wisdom and Power and Love is over all things, and to look forward with confident hope that the end will justify every step of the long road.