

The Christ of the Church

Charles A. Briggs



The American Journal of Theology, Vol. 16, No. 2. (Apr., 1912), pp. 196-217.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1550-3283%28191204%2916%3A2%3C196%3ATCOTC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y>

The American Journal of Theology is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE CHRIST OF THE CHURCH

CHARLES A. BRIGGS

The Christ of the church is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, so far as he is apprehended in the experience of the Christian church. We have to distinguish the Christ of the church from the Christ of the theologians and the people, as individuals or as schools of thought, whether sectarian, heretical, or as variant without schism or heresy. The Christ of the church is what the church as the body of Christ stands for, as expressed in her official statements and embodied in her official institutions. Individual members of the church, whether they be theologians or not, are sometimes in advance of the consensus of the church, and know the Christ more comprehensively and thoroughly than the church as a body. But more frequently these individuals, and the schools and parties that gather about them, fall short of the faith of the church, or deviate from it in various forms of error or heresy.

The Christ of the church is always the Christ of the Bible, for the church always holds to the divine authority of the Bible in her Christology, as in all matters of faith and morals. The Christ of the Bible is, however, presented in the biblical writers in many different writings from different points of view, and in many varying representations. There is the ideal Christ of the Old Testament before his advent in the flesh. There is the Christ of the Gospels, presenting, from four different points of view, the Christ during his earthly life. There is also the Christ of the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation, presenting him from the point of view of his resurrection from the dead, his reign over his messianic kingdom, and his second advent; and explaining his incarnation, his earthly life and death, as well as the messianic ideals of the Old Testament from these points of view.

All these representations of the Christ in the Bible, when we compare them and try to combine them in harmony in a higher

unity, are partial and incomplete. They make it evident that the Christ of God is much more comprehensive and profound than the Christ of the Bible, in which many parts are lacking that seem necessary to completeness, many features are absent essential to a harmonious whole.

The Gospel of John tells us as its last word, after all the Gospels had been written: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (21:25).

If that is true of his brief earthly life, how much more must it be true of that "eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (I John 1:2): of "Christ in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:3). That which underlies the biblical statements of the Christ, that which envelopes them on all sides, that which logically, both by induction and deduction, is involved in the biblical doctrine, that which in religious experience is the necessary consequence of the vital union and communion with him, involved in regeneration, in the indwelling divine Spirit, and in the realization of the real presence of the Christ in accordance with his promise, in the consciousness of the individual and of the church: all these make it certain that the Christ of the church is much more than the Christ of the apostles. As the church advances toward the realization of her ideal, she learns more and more in her experience that all things are summed up in Jesus Christ, that her task is to christianize the world, christologize all knowledge, and "crown Him Lord of all."

When one begins to realize what the church is and comprehends, according to the experience and teaching of the biblical writers, he sees, to some extent at least, that it was not possible for any one biblical writer, even though it was a St. Peter, a St. Paul, or a St. John, to comprehend the whole Christ, still less for the church at any period of history to give full expression to all that Christ is to her. What St. Paul tells us of the pious individual is true of the church in all ages: "Now we know in part, now we see in a mirror darkly" (I Cor. 13:12). And not until the church has been perfected at the second advent of our Lord, shall we see "face to face."

So St. John tells us that when "he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2).

The Christ is "the same yesterday and to-day and forever" (Heb. 13:8); but the church's experience of him is not the same; it varies from time to time in the apprehension of those specific characteristics of the person, life, and work of Christ that her experience in other matters leads her to emphasize at the time. On the whole the church advances steadily and firmly toward her ideal, notwithstanding reactionary movements that occasionally arise, as human knowledge extends its area and human activity enlarges its scope. Those who, at any time, emphasize the importance of this new knowledge and these new achievements, often in the pride of their possession are disposed to challenge the Christ of the church, who does not seem to agree altogether with them, and obstinately to resist his supremacy over them. This could hardly be otherwise, human nature being what it is. It is an inevitable result of the development of the world and man as the environment of the kingdom of Christ, as our Lord is gradually, surely, and irresistibly bringing all things under his gracious rule. "He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:25).

The Christ of the church advances through the ages of history, in the religious experience of his people, the doctrinal definitions of the church, and the institutions of worship and discipline that further union and communion with him. So far as her apprehension of Christ is concerned the church always advances. Whatever her faults and failures may be in other respects, she never retreats from him. Individuals may and do fall away into serious error and sin. Her scholars are sometimes unfaithful, and, in their pride of the knowledge of other things, forget their Lord. Her people sometimes are recreant and negligent of their exalted privileges. But the church as a body has never retracted her Christology, has never withdrawn the Christ of her experience from her faith and worship.

It is indeed one of the most remarkable things in history that the church has always maintained the christological definition that her experience of Christ has impelled her to make. There have been numerous errors and heresies which required long and severe

struggles to overcome; but once overcome, the church has maintained her Christology as an impregnable fortress.

The ancient heresies revive from time to time in those who find it difficult to reconcile the Christ of the church with their speculations in philosophy or science; but these speculators have never made any important or lasting impression upon the world. They have been thrown off by the church without hesitation and at little cost. Whatever has been discovered by science or philosophy that had any validity, has fitted into the Christology of the church with the utmost nicety and exactness; for all truth is harmonious, and our Christ is the eternal Logos, the King of Truth.

It is significant that the modern objectors to the Christ of the church have nothing new to say. They have not, and cannot devise any new christological heresy. They take refuge in every case in some one of the ancient heresies. It has been my life-work as a professor of theology for thirty-eight years, to battle and suffer much to maintain the rights of criticism, and I ought to know, if anyone does, what criticism has or has not accomplished. I have made Christology, more than even criticism, the study of my life, and have not shrunk from the investigation of its most profound and difficult questions. In late years I have sought to find in the most recent results of scientific and philosophical investigation something that would help in the study of the most difficult theological questions, anything that would enable me to test, verify, or correct, the christological opinions I had inherited from my teachers; and I venture to affirm that I have found very little help. And I challenge any man to produce any valid results of modern philosophy or modern science that will in the slightest degree impair the Christ of the church as represented in her creeds and institutions.

So far as biblical and historical criticism has been conducted on strictly scientific principles, in accordance with the rules of criticism, it has resulted in the vindication of the Christ of the Bible. As my life-long friend, Andrew Fairbairn truly says:

This may be said to be the distinction between the old Theology and the new: the former was primarily doctrinal and secondarily historical; but the latter is primarily historical and secondarily doctrinal. The old Theology came to history through doctrine, but the new comes to doctrine through history;

to the one all historical questions were really dogmatic, but to the other all dogmatic questions are formally historical. This does not mean the surrender of doctrine but rather the enlargement of its meaning and scope.¹

It is only when students, too impatient to use exact methods, jump into speculations, that they question the Christ of the Bible; and such questioning is altogether invalid and unscholarly. If they come to the Christ of the Bible with a-priori theories, with which it is impossible to reconcile the Christ of the Bible, they cannot from the very nature of the case accept him. But such preconceptions are altogether uncritical, unscientific, and destructive of sound scholarship as well as of faith.

As I have already said, the church advances in her knowledge of Christ for she knows him only in part. There are many questions in Christology that the church has not yet defined, and which challenge the study of devout Christian scholars. But all these questions spring out of those which have been already solved, and can only be adequately considered on their basis. They will be defined only by advance, not by any, even the slightest, retreat.

It is significant that the modern objectors to the Christ of the church do not concern themselves with these unsolved problems; they content themselves with challenging the definitions that the church has already made. They revive ancient heresies, nothing more. These speculators, many of them, call themselves Modernists. They tell us they have a new theology. They may be Modernists in the philosophical and scientific spheres, they may have new speculations, some true and some false; but so far as theology is concerned and the Christ of the church, they have nothing new or modern.

True Modernists, so far as theology is concerned, reject them; for they prostitute the severe work of scientific criticism, which modern scholarship has so greatly advanced, to their unscientific speculations. Some years ago they said to us: "Let us go back from the Christologies to the historic Christ." But they have found out that the historic Christ of the Gospels corresponds with the Christ of the church, and now they are seeking a Christ unknown to the Gospels or the New Testament, misunderstood by his

¹ *Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, 3-4.

apostles; whom they would put in the frame of a syncretistic religion. But in this they give us nothing new; they are simply reverting to the most ancient of all heresies the Gnosticism of the second Christian century, which the church of Christ overcame once for all and forever. They have not reverted to the doctors and Fathers of the church, or to Jesus Christ and his apostles, but to ancient heresies, those syncretistic mixtures of heathenism with Christianity, which were an abomination to genuine original Christianity. They have dug out of the grave errors that were slain and buried centuries ago, which are foul with corruption, tainting the whole system of Christian doctrine, Christian institution, and Christian life and work, to those who handle them.

I do not assert that the traditional Christology of the church must remain forever unmodified, or that we can learn nothing new of those features of Christ's person, life, and work that have thus far been defined by the church. For thirty-eight years as a professor of theology I have contended for revision of formulas, for the appropriation of all that has been proved valid in modern science and modern philosophy, and the rejection of every theological opinion that could not stand the tests of biblical and historical criticism, carefully used in accordance with their principles and rules. But we must affirm that all changes in theology should depend on evidence strictly tested and verified. We cannot make changes as mere speculations in theology, or as adapted to mere speculations in science and philosophy. My experience as a teacher of theology, corresponding with all those in whom I have confidence, in the present as in the past, convinces me that we may change the formulas and modes of statement, explain difficulties, and enlarge our knowledge of the Christ, but we cannot change the substance of the Christology of the Christian church in any particular.

This substance should be tested and eliminated from the accretions true or false of the theologians. The substance may be better understood and more clearly explained as the church proceeds in her work of christianizing and christologizing all things, for everything that is learned must be brought into relation to Christ, and Christ must be apprehended in these new relations as well as in the

old. But this again is only re-emphasizing what has already been said, that the Christology of the church will be changed by advance, not by retreat, and that the Christ of the church of the past is essential to our apprehension of the Christ of the present and the future.

The church in her apprehensions of Christ advances in the evolutions of history. All history is a history of divine government of the world, of the divine training of our race. All history is under the dominion of Christ the vicegerent of God the Father. Therefore, all history in its evolutions is in the interest of the church as the kingdom of God, and of Christ as the king of the church. St. Paul tells us: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). So the fulness of the time gives birth to every epoch of history, every new advance of Christ as the head of the church, every new step in the progress of the church in the christianization and christologizing of the world.

The ancient church defined her faith in the person of Christ, the mediaeval church her faith in the work of Christ, the modern church her union and communion with Christ.

The ancient church begins her definition in the Trinitarian formula which recognizes Christ as the Son of God, the Savior, the Second Person of the Trinity of God. Then the Apostles' Creed expands her faith in Christ as Savior into the six saving acts: "born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, on the third day risen, ascended into heaven, enthroned at the right hand of the Father, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." The Nicene Creed defines Christ as a personal subsistence distinct from the Father as Son, and yet consubstantial with the Father, uncreated and eternal; rejecting Arianism which regards him as a creature, Sabellianism which regards him as only a manifestation of God, and Samosateneism, which regards him as a divinely inhabited man in ethical union with the Father.

The later form of the Nicene Creed, as presented to the Council of Constantinople, and finally adopted by the Council of Chalcedon on the basis of the Creed of the Church of Jerusalem, took up into itself all the sections of the Apostles' Creed in their eastern

forms, and so became the oecumenical conciliar creed of the universal church. The Council of Ephesus rejects Apollinarianism and its denial of a rational human soul to Christ. Its definition is added to the Athanasian Creed, which in other respects is built on the Augustinian interpretation of the Nicene Creed. The Council of Chalcedon rejects Nestorianism, which found two persons in Christ in ethical union, and asserted the single personality of Christ, uniting two natures, the divine and the human, indivisibly and inseparably. It also rejected Eutychianism, which insisted upon a single nature in Christ after the incarnation; and it maintained that the two natures, the divine and the human, remained forever distinct and unconfused, united in the one Christ.

The later councils struggled with Monophysitism and insisted upon the Chalcedonian formula in its legitimate interpretation, holding to the completeness of both natures, human and divine in Christ, and their union in one divine person, and rejected every form of confusion and incompleteness of the two natures: as, for example, in its affirmation of two separate and distinct wills in Christ, the divine and the human in ethical but not substantial union.

With these definitions the faith of the church in the person of Christ was settled once for all. In the early Middle Ages a form of Nestorianism was revived in Adoptionianism distinguishing between the eternal Son and the adopted Son; and a form of Monophysitism in Nihilianism, regarding the human nature of Christ as nothing more than a theophanic vesture. These were local and temporary opinions which were at once rejected by the western church. Since that time no new heresies as to the person of Christ have arisen. All the churches of the Reformation and of the seventeenth century agree with the Greek and Roman churches in this common faith, this consensus in the person of Christ, whom all alike worship and adore as their Lord and their God, their Savior for time and eternity.

The mediaeval church defined her faith in the work of Christ. Augustine, the Athanasius of the West, had developed the Pauline doctrines of sin and grace. These had been defined by the Synod of Orange, 529, in a mild form, the divine grace on its positive

side as elective, original sin on its negative side as privative. These doctrines had to be christologized and brought into subjection to Christ. This was accomplished by attaching them to the mediatorial work of Christ through the church and the sacraments. The church and the sacraments as institutions of Christ bore with them not only the grace of God, but the real presence of Christ. This was especially defined in the doctrine of the eucharist at the Council of Rome under Hildebrand in 1079, by the rejection of the symbolical interpretation on the one hand and the cannibalistic on the other, and the maintenance of the real substantial presence of Christ.

The real presence of Christ in the eucharist was the most prominent and important form of his presence; but not the only one, for he was also present in baptism with its grace of regeneration, and in the church as his body in all her institutions. It was this sense of his presence that gave the church an exaggerated idea of her authority and power over the administration of the divine grace.

It may be said that the chief work of the Middle Ages was the building up of the church as Christ's institution, with her ministry, sacraments, and other sacred things. And yet there is not, in fact, any symbolical definition of the church in any of the acts of councils or synods during the entire period. Even at the Reformation the Roman church gave no definition of the church at the Council of Trent, nor indeed until the Vatican Council in 1870. The reason for this is that the essential doctrine of the church was not questioned until recent times. The doctrine of the church was stated in the Apostles' and Nicene creeds in connection with the article of the Holy Spirit, as one holy, catholic, apostolic church. It was implied that the church was Christ's own church, and that was not questioned by any heresy until our day when efforts are made to distinguish between the kingdom of God and the church. The only question that was raised of any great importance was as to the *holy* church, whether it could include the unholy and unfaithful, and whether it was necessary to separate from such a mixed church and organize a pure church of saints. Such attempts were occasionally made in the ancient, mediaeval, and modern times. But these were always resisted by the great

divines and bishops of the church. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas especially built up the doctrine of the church over against schismatics, not only by insisting upon the unity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church as well as its sanctity, but also by unfolding the biblical conception of the church as the kingdom of Christ, his body and bride. St. Thomas urges the doctrine that Christ, as the perfect man, possesses the plenitude of the divine grace, and as the head of the church imparts his personal authority, and diffuses his grace through all its institutions and into all its members.

At the Reformation, the Protestants rejected many special opinions of the church and its institutions that prevailed before the Reformation, some of which were rejected, others maintained by the Council of Trent; but they did not question the fundamental christological features of the church. In all essentials they built on St. Augustine and St. Thomas as truly as did Rome.

The fullest statements of the doctrines of the church are the *Orthodox Confession* of the eastern church, 1643, the *Westminster Confession*, 1647, and the *Vatican Decrees*, 1870. If now we compare these three statements of the three great divisions of Christendom it is evident that they agree so far as the doctrine of the church is christologized:

1. Christ is the head of his body, the church.
2. The church is the bride of Christ.
3. The church is the kingdom of Christ.
4. The church is the administrator of the grace of Christ.
5. Christ has given to his church "the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints."
6. Christ's own presence is with the church always.

There is no disagreement as to these matters, so far as the official doctrines of these churches is concerned: however great the differences may be in other particulars. And the same may be said of the Lutheran churches and of the Anglican church and her non-conforming daughters.

It was the merit of Bernard and Anselm that they christologized the doctrine of sin, by showing that the incarnation was in order to make the propitiatory sacrifice for sin by Christ's death on the

cross. This doctrine won the consensus of the mediaeval church, but did not find symbolical or official statement until the sixteenth century, because there was no controversy as to the essentials of the doctrine but only as to unessential details until modern times. All that is really christologized in the doctrine is now as ever the common faith of the church.

The western church at an early date put into the Athanasian and Nicene creeds the doctrine of the Procession of the Divine Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. This doctrine was at first a theological opinion, but at last was defined by the Council of Lyons, 1274, as a single spiration in which Father and Son united in one act and not in successive acts. The Greeks objected to this doctrine as a usurpation of dogmatic authority by the western church, and as untrue in the form in which it was expressed. At the Council of Florence, in 1439, at the close of the mediaeval period, this doctrine was so defined as to remove the objections of the Greeks; and it was recognized that the Greek doctrine of John of Damascus, that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father *through* the Son, was identical with the western doctrine of a single spiration in which Father and Son jointly act.

Though the Greek church did not officially partake with the western church in any of the definitions of the Christ of the Middle Ages, she agrees with them all in fact, as was made evident at the Council of Florence, when East and West were reunited for a time, to be separated after a brief period for political and ecclesiastical, rather than doctrinal reasons.

The Protestant churches of the Reformation did not differ from the mediaeval church in their Christology. They denied transubstantiation, the scholastic definition of the presence of Christ in the eucharist; but they all recognized the real presence, however much they differed as to its mode. It was indeed their zeal for the one sacrifice of Christ that induced them to reject the common opinions of an ill-trained ministry as to the eucharistic propitiatory sacrifice. The real presence of Christ in the church and her sacraments was as truly a Protestant experience as it was Greek and Roman. The church is Christ's own church, the sacraments are his sacraments, the work of Atonement is his atonement. All grace and all salvation is Christ's, the one mediator and redeemer.

The modern church began with controversies of the most serious kind, which have not yet been determined, and the different sections into which the western church was divided defined their faith in many different confessions of faith. There is, however, a consensus as well as a dissensus, and that consensus is especially marked in her doctrine of Christ. The modern church is especially concerned with the application of redemption to the individual, and so far as that is christologized, it means the union and communion of the individual with Christ. All the most important theological debates centered about these questions.

The mediaeval church had been chiefly concerned with the saving work of Christ itself, especially as administered by the church in her institutions and sacraments, and only incidentally in his work as applied to the individual. The church of the Reformation emphasized the individual in his relation to Christ and salvation. Hence the forgiveness of sins and the justification of the penitent sinner became prominent doctrines. These had to be christologized, and the supreme question of divine authority had to be considered and defined which alone could decide these and all other controversies.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to the principles of the Reformation. Most scholars think too narrowly of Protestantism alone, and overlook the Reformation of the Roman Catholic church, or else style it the Counter-Reformation. There is a common advance, a consensus of modern theology between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches notwithstanding their great differences. However much scholars may differ as to the relative importance of the doctrines of the Reformation, it will be agreed that the most important questions are the following:

1. Where shall divine authority for the Christian be found, in the Bible, or in the church also?
2. The forgiveness of sins and the justification of the penitent sinner, are they apprehended by faith only, or by faith and love?
3. Union and communion with God, are they chiefly immediate, the believer having direct access to God through Christ, or is the mediating church to be emphasized?
4. The universal priesthood of believers, how far is it consistent with a mediating priesthood?

These four questions are answered in different ways by Roman Catholics and Protestants, but their definitions of these doctrines are not so antithetical as is sometimes supposed. There is indeed a consensus in which the real advance of the church consists; and that is, just so far as these doctrines have been christologized.

There is concord in the recognition of the divine authority of the Bible. It is the merit of Luther and Zwingli that they alike saw that the gospel of Christ was supreme in the Bible. Certainly Rome does not teach otherwise; indeed the present pontiff proposed at his installation "to restore all things in Christ." And undoubtedly that has been the aim of his pontificate, whatever opinion we may hold as to his policy in carrying it out. It is the supreme authority of Christ in apostolic tradition, whether written or oral, interpreted by the authority of Christ in the church that the Roman Catholic church stands for.

The difference is as to the authority of the church to define the Canon of Scripture and interpret it, and as to the value of the experience of the church as expressed in a tradition handed down from the apostles and defined by a consensus of the Fathers of the church. And this authority of the church is not an authority apart from Christ, but an authority of Christ expressed through the church, which cannot, it is maintained, differ from the authority of Christ in the Bible. The divine authority of Christ as supreme in religion is the common faith of the modern church.

The battle of the Lutheran Reformation began with reference to the forgiveness of sins, and expanded in a contest over the justification of the penitent sinner by God, whether by faith only, or by love and its works in addition to faith. When now we christologize this doctrine, we see that the concord is greater than the discord. For it is agreed that forgiveness of sins and justification are due not to human merit, but to the divine grace and the righteousness of Christ. It is agreed that the grace of God is given only through the mediation of Christ, and in the use of the means of grace, especially the church and the sacraments; and that faith in Christ is essential to the reception of forgiveness of sins and justification by God and every kind of grace. The difference is in the definition of justification, whether it is an act of God, which is immediate, or a work continuing through the Christian life.

It is agreed that the individual believer enters into union and communion with God. When this doctrine is christologized, it is also agreed that this communion can only be through Christ, the mediator, that the only way to God the Father is through the Son. The personal union and communion with Christ is therefore the essential thing that Rome and Protestants agree to. The difference is how far it is immediate, without the mediation of the church and its institutions, and how far it is mediate through the church and its institutions. With this is involved the question what is the relation of the grace of Christ to the sacraments, and what is the mode of His presence therein; but these are questions of mode and degree, and not as to the reality of presence, or the necessity of his grace and presence to real union and communion with God.

There are those who think that the Protestant position may be summed up in the universal priesthood of all believers. There is undoubtedly a great difference between Rome and Protestants here. But when this doctrine is christologized there is no essential difference. For both recognize that Christians are a royal priesthood, as they constitute the kingdom of Jesus Christ, as an organism in union and communion with him. They also recognize that the royal priesthood is distributive in so far as every Christian is baptized into union with Christ, and participates in the holy communion of the eucharist. They also agree that there is an apostolic ministry in the church, ministering in the name of Christ to the people. They differ in the measure and extent to which they attribute priestly and royal functions to the ministry. So far as Rome and Protestants disagree on these subjects, the Greek church agrees with Rome.

Thus so far as the special doctrines of the Reformation are christologized and brought into union with Christ, the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Greek are one. All alike recognize that forgiveness of sins and justification are freely given to the individual because of the merits of Jesus Christ the only Savior. All recognize that by faith in Christ we find our way to union with God, and that we commune with him through love to Christ. All agree that they find Christ their personal Savior in the church and in the sacraments of the church. They are baptized into Christ's name. They partake of Christ's body and blood in the eucharist.

Christ is the center and mediator of all their worship. Christ is the supreme authority wherever and whenever they find him in all their thinking and living.

Protestant theologians since the Reformation have been greatly concerned to know more thoroughly the gracious activities of Christ, and so have studied him in the distinctions between his states of pre-existence, of humiliation on earth, and of exaltation at his resurrection, and in his offices of prophet, priest, and king. Various kenotic theories have been worked out to explain some of the difficulties in connection with the incarnation, but none of these opinions have as yet attained the consensus of the church.

The past century has been distinguished for its study of the Christ of the Gospels, which have been investigated from every point of view. This has naturally resulted in an emphasis upon the historic Christ, and enlarged the experience of Christians with regard to the human feature of our Redeemer. He is known as the brother man, as the norm of human life and activity as never before. Morals have been to some extent christologized, and efforts are made to christologize also the social, economic, and political activities of our times. As in all previous efforts to advance the knowledge of Christ, and realize that knowledge in experience and institution, errors of various kinds have arisen, exaggerations on the one side and defects on the other, misinterpretations of Scripture and perversion of Christian history in the interest of particular theories. Accordingly it is quite common at present to exaggerate the human nature of Christ, and neglect or deny his divine nature. In the effort to emphasize the brotherly likeness of Jesus the human nature is individualized as in the Nestorian and Samosatene heresies, and his special characteristic as God incarnate, the second Adam, the head of renewed humanity, the unique man, presenting humanity in its supreme ideal, is overlooked or denied.

In the effort to make Jesus a purely natural man, they deny the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, and everything in the nature of the supernatural, whether miraculous, theophanic, apocalyptic, or messianic, as misunderstandings of his early disciples. They read into the Gospels political, social, and economic

theories which were alien to his mind; and so they substitute for the church of Christ, and the sacraments instituted by him, a kingdom which is no kingdom at all, but a socialistic democracy of economic equality. They substitute for his ideals of voluntary poverty, relinquishment of rights, and submission to authority in holy self-sacrificing love, a struggle for economic betterments, sociological and political rights. Our Savior refused the kingdom of this world as a temptation of the devil, and established his kingdom as a church whose supreme task is the ministering of his salvation to the world. He is head of his body, the church, not of the kingdoms or democracies of this world. He is Savior of the world so far as the world becomes a part of his church. He is sovereign and judge of the world so far as it refuses his church and his salvation. In the midst of all this strife of tongues, this profound study of the Gospels, this enriched experience of the historic Christ, this speculation and theorizing by impatient, illogical, and undisciplined spirits, the church holds fast to her Christ as thus far defined in her consensus, and refuses to enlarge it until all this study and speculation has resulted in an experience and a doctrine that will prove itself to be a real advance in her knowledge of the Christ.

A. B. Bruce, after reviewing thoroughly all these modern theories, asks the question:

To whom shall we go to escape mystery? We therefore decide to remain with the Christ of the creeds, feeling that if there be in Him that which perplexes and confounds our intellect, there is also that which gives unspeakable satisfaction to the heart; a Christ who came from glory to save the lost, who humbled himself to become man and died on the cross; a Christ in whom God manifests Himself as a self-sacrificing being, and exhibits to our view the maximum of Gracious Possibility.²

Our historical survey makes it evident that the Christian church in all her branches has a consensus in her Christology, and in all her other doctrines just so far as they have been christologized. This consensus, notwithstanding so much conflict and discord in other matters, shows that in fact our Lord and Master has kept his promise faithfully. He has given his church his presence, and

² *Humiliation of Christ*, 236.

held her firmly to himself in spite of her sins and follies, her failures and errors in other respects.

On this account, if on no other, modern men should hesitate before they question the Christ of the church in any of the relations in which he appears in the experience of his church. From the very nature of the case the Christ of the church in his person, work, and relations to the world and man must be the greatest of all mysteries. We can never until the end of the Dispensation see him as he is, and know him as we would know him. We can never comprehend him in the categories of science or philosophy.

Science and philosophy, and every department of human knowledge and of human life will not accomplish their own end and purpose until they have been christologized, and brought into subjection to him, who is the Eternal Logos, the fountain of all knowledge, the sum of all wisdom, the king of all truth and fact.

Undoubtedly the most of the definitions of the Christ of the church have resulted from conflicts of greater or less severity. The experience of the church in her advance in the knowledge of Christ has been obliged to contend with reactionaries on the one hand and rash speculators on the other. Some of her noblest sons have been incautious and inadvertently have fallen into error. They have failed; but their failures have saved others from their fate, and so they have served the church by forcing her to define her faith. It has taken time for the church to attain her consensus. In that consensus more was left open to question than decided. Only that has been decided that seemed to be essential to keep the church in the normal line of her growth and ward off heresies. There are a multitude of questions which arise with reference to all these decisions, which may be studied and discussed by devout Christians where they have liberty of opinion, limited, however, by the experience of the past which urges us to careful, painstaking, devout study in the normal lines of the faith of the church, and warns us of the perils of any divergence from it. We may challenge the Christology of the theologians of the church, ancient, mediaeval, or modern, but the Christ of the church cannot be denied with impunity.

The terminology used in the definitions of the Christ of the

church are from the very nature of the case terms that seemed most appropriate at the time the definitions were made. They have their historic meaning which is not always clear to the common mind of our times. But theology is not the only department of learning that has technical terms. Law and medicine make much greater use of them. Every branch of science, every school of philosophy has its technical terms; and they are continually coining new ones. How absurd to object to the techniques of theology. It is not intended that all the high doctrines of theology shall be made plain to children, or the untrained adult. There is the catechism for the child, which is properly a plain exposition of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments. There is the Nicene Creed for adults, the proper creed for the eucharist. The other definitions of the church are for the ministry, who in their discretion are to train their people in the knowledge of them. You can no more explain the Christ of the church without the historic technical terms, wrought out of the experience of the church, than you can explain law or medicine, philosophy or science in the common everyday language of the people. Those ministers who try to do so undermine the faith of the church and imperil her existence.

If one would understand theology, he must study theology. If he would know the Christ of the Church, he must not only study him properly, but have faith in him, love him, and adore him. Spiritual things can be understood only by spiritual men. The Christ of the church can only be known by a Christian, who has come into union with him by faith and love, and who communes with him in the institutions of the church, especially the holy eucharist. As the Apostle tells us, the Christian ministry was given by Christ for this very purpose: "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13).

If any man cannot give his consent to all of the Christ that the church presents to him, if he cannot reconcile him with his scientific or philosophic formulas, that does not justify him in denying the

Christ of the church in whole or in part. It rather challenges him to a reinvestigation of his formulas, a careful distinction between fact and theory, truth and speculation, and a calm and patient waiting for that reconciliation that will come from more searching investigation, more comprehensive knowledge, and a modest recognition of a universe crowded with mysteries, which at present at least are insoluble; and of that world the Christ of the church is supreme.

We have the word of a distinguished professor of anatomy, of Harvard, published only a few months ago, to this effect.

Science, though in a lower sphere, has also her dogmas, doctrines, views, and theories ranging from practical certainty, through every degree of probability down to mere speculation. From the very nature of things quite absolute certainty is not readily attainable. True Science therefore demands that theories should not be given as facts, nor working hypotheses revered as laws. This is the plain course of sense and honesty. Unfortunately this is so often lost sight of that much has been palmed off on the public as Science which is but its poorest counterfeit, by raving fanatics, shrieking that religion must be made over to conform to some theological vagary, born yesterday to be forgotten tomorrow.³

The author is a devout Roman Catholic.

In fact there is nothing in modern science that forbids a scientist from being a Catholic or a Protestant, Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational, Methodist, Baptist, or any other of the denominations of Christ's church. The greatest living scientists are true Christians, and hold as firmly as do theologians to the Christ of the church.

One of the most distinguished of recent American philosophers said only a short time before his death:

I saw that philosophy had been on a false scent ever since the days of Socrates and Plato, that an intellectual answer to the intellectualists' difficulties will never come, and that the real way out of them, far from consisting in the discovery of such an answer, consists in simply closing our ears to the question. . . .⁴

For my own part I have finally found myself compelled to give up the logic fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality.⁵

³ *Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist*, 11-12.

⁴ *Pluralistic Universe*, 291.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

He then endeavors to construct a "faith ladder," but says, "Not one step in this process is logical, yet it is the way in which monists and pluralists alike espouse and hold fast to their visions" (p. 329).

Professor Dwight well says of this effort:

But one might ask, if to be a Monist one must give up common sense, why be a Monist at all? He seems to consider Monism a creed its professors are bound in conscience to defend, even as Catholics owe allegiance to the Church.⁶

I do not agree to this bankruptcy of philosophy and logic to which Professor James would reduce philosophy, any more than I do to the shipwreck of Christian dogma to which Harnack and his disciples would reduce the faith of Christ's church. The Ritschlians throw overboard metaphysic and mystic, and limit themselves to what they call "judgments of value." Of course the Christ of the church must be given up also. He refuses to be reduced to a judgment of value.

I hold, as the church has held from the beginning and now holds, that philosophy is the handmaid of theology. They have unfolded side by side in history with mutual help and advantage. But it is necessary to say that if this statement of Professor James, or anything like it, is what modern philosophy has to offer us, it is certainly no help to theology, and I am quite sure it will be no hindrance. If modern philosophy has nothing better to offer us than bankruptcy and shipwreck; if logic—the law of human thought—is to be discredited; and "faith's ladder" is to be nothing more than the hope of a man who has nothing else to offer us in religion: even the ordinary man has a sufficient amount of logic and common sense to avoid it, and seek salvation where it is really to be found in the Christ of the church. There are philosophers and philosophers. There are philosophers who are Christians in accordance with their philosophy, as well as those others who try to be Christians despite their philosophy.

The most philosophic theologians of the last generation were my teachers, Henry B. Smith and Isaac A. Dorner. They were masters of philosophy ancient and modern, and they taught me that Christ was the center of theology, and that all knowledge

⁶ *Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist*, 39-40.

should be christologized. The most philosophic theologians of my generation are Robert Flint and Andrew Fairbairn. These held fast to the Christ of the church and found no difficulty in reconciling Christ and philosophy.

Compared with these four great Christian scholars—and I could name a multitude of others—those who are now claiming the support of philosophy to undermine the faith of the church in her Christ are pygmies: “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness after the wiles of error” (Eph. 4:14). The Christ of the church, today as ever, rallies to him the faith and hope and love of the greatest scientists and philosophers and men of learning of all kinds, as well as of the poor and ignorant, and of all grades between them, for he is the universal Christ and the common Savior.

As the Apostle tells us, our Christ is:

The image of the invisible God,
 The first-born of all creation,
 For in Him were all things created,
 In the heavens and upon the earth,
 Things visible and things invisible,
 Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;
 All things have been created through Him and unto Him;
 And He is before all things,
 And in Him all things consist.
 And He is the Head of the body, the Church:
 Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead;
 That in all He might have the pre-eminence.
 For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness
 dwell;
 And through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself,
 Having made peace through the blood of His cross;
 Through Him whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens (Col.
 1:15-20).

In the presence of such a Christ how can we do otherwise than bow in adoration, awe, and wonder? It is irreverent for anyone to think he can altogether understand such a Christ, and bring him within any categories or formulas that man can devise. It is temerity for anyone to suppose that he can deny the faith of the

church in such a Christ simply because he cannot explain this or that feature of him.

Such irreverence and temerity cannot be regarded as innocent. It is, and must be, considered as serious guilt, imperiling salvation. Men cannot plead ignorance, or inadvertence, or misguidance in doctrine any more than in conduct, except as in mitigation. Such excuses cannot exempt them from guilt and penalty. The church, through her 1900 years of experience of the Christ, has always had, and has today, a wonderful consensus in her faith in him. She offers her Christ to the world as the world's noblest Ideal, as the world's chief Hope, as the ever-present Savior and the final Judge. Her apostolic commission is to preach now as ever: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).