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of our sin, it would mean that the sacrifice of Christ was insufficient. God forgives as unconditionally as the creditor in the parable, 'When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both' (Luke vii. 42). It is not the amount of the debt which is in question, it is the utter bankruptcy of the debtor. Man cannot meet the demands of a Holy God for Righteousness of Life; but God in Christ has provided the way of acceptance, and that is what we mean by Justification. The entry into this experience is well put in Bonar's words:

Thy work alone, O Christ,  
 Can ease this weight of sin;  
 Thy Blood alone, O Lamb of God,  
 Can give me peace within.

I bless the CHRIST of God,  
 I rest on Love Divine;  
 And, with unfaltering lip and heart,  
 I call this Saviour mine.

To quote from the Homily: Justification is not the office of man but of God. For man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in part, nor in the whole; for that were the greatest arrogance and presumption of man that Anti-Christ could set up against God, to affirm that a man might by his own works take away and purge his own sins, and so justify himself. But Justification is the office of God only; and is not a thing which we render unto Him, but which we receive of Him; not which we give to Him, but which we take of Him, by His free mercy, and by the only merits of His most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour, and Justifier, Jesus Christ.'

## Trends in Present Day Theology.

By THE REV. D. W. CLEVERLEY FORD, B.D., M.Th.

**I**T is apparent to the most casual observer that as regards theology we are to-day in a transition period. There is no one great broad movement which marks the day. We live in a reactionary period; yet for all this, there is a tendency which it is the purpose of this article to examine. In the broadest outline it may be said that there are three schools of thought, the fundamentalist, the modernist, and the most recent outlook commonly called "dogmatic" or "conservative."

The Fundamentalist view is ancient, it is not dead, but its ascendancy was in the past before the days of Biblical Criticism, so that with the rise of that study, its field of influence is now limited. In its extreme form this view declared that every letter, every word of the Bible was dictated as it were by the Holy Ghost. Bible Study showed this extreme view to be of no practical value since there are many passages in the Old Testament which make no sense at all as they stand.

We do not know what the original words were. In practice too, it is argued, the fundamentalists have had to bring to the Scriptures extraneous principles of interpretation to expound them and this usually takes the form of the traditional Protestant theology, which goes back to the Reformers. Not that the Reformers were fundamentalists in the later sense. Luther desired to omit the Epistle of James from the Canon and had some very bitter things to say about it, and Calvin too was a critic. The Reformers did, in fact, distinguish between the Bible as a series of words, sentences and books on the one hand, and the Word of God on the other.

The second great school of thought, or rather trend of theology, was modernism. We do not, of course, refer to that movement which originally had this title, namely the liberal movement in the Roman Church championed by Loisy and Tyrrell, but to that which is more popularly conceived as modernism. This of course, again is a reactionary movement. Biblical criticism so went on apace that Protestantism in its theological quarters began to look for a new dogmatic altogether. Encouraged by Harnack (who wrote his *History of Dogma* in seven volumes to prove his point) the Modernist alleged that from the first the Christian Church developed along wrong lines. The Apostle Paul first led the Church astray by introducing into the simple religion of Jesus, Greek religious ideas and phrases. Even the sacraments are the sacred festivals of the Greek Mystery Religions revised and adapted for Christianity; indeed the official Christianity was a kind of a lake produced by the various religions and faiths of the ancient world flowing as rivers into it. Paul then substituted the gospel *about* Jesus in place of the simple Gospel *of* Jesus. It is therefore necessary to separate the simple preacher Jesus, from Paul's dogmatic Christ; there is the Jesus of History and the Christ of theology and they are not the same. Even so, it is not enough to have separated out the simple historic person of Jesus in the Gospels; the very presentation of His person in the Gospels themselves has been overlaid, blurred, distorted and obscured. We must strip away these artificial garments if we would see the real Jesus, the essence of Christianity, for the garments are the product of Faith not of History. Form-Criticism will allow us to see that the gospel stories and miracles are little more than mere husks which husks nevertheless are valuable in that they do preserve the real and historical man Jesus. If then within the New Testament itself we see such corruption of the original Jesus, a confusion produced by the grafting on of alien theologies to the true and simple religion of Jesus, what shall we say of the theologies of the Fathers? What of the schoolmen? What of the systems of the Reformers? They have assisted the process of corruption! The Modernist then looks not for a re-interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity, nor for a more lucid Christology, nor a doctrine of the Atonement, but for a radical reconstruction of the whole idea of Christianity, a new faith in scientific accord with the thought forms of the age.

All this is a far cry from the Fundamentalist view with its traditional theology. It is reactionary, indeed we can almost say it is the complete opposite, it is the swing of the pendulum. And yet we must admit there is value in both these views. The fundamentalist has, after all,

something worth while in his authority, he *can* speak almost as did the ancient prophet—"Thus saith the Lord." He preserves in his system the unique, the divine, the miraculous. The Modernist has something worthwhile in his system too. Scientifically he has sought the heart and root of Christianity, he has tried to separate out the unessential and the secondary; above all he has attempted to recover the Jesus of history Who may so easily be absorbed into the Christ of dogmatics. But neither Fundamentalist nor Modernist have come to possess the inheritance, they are superseded, or are being superseded in these days. Some may find difficulty in this thought of the perpetual flux of theological thought but we may note that theology has always developed on the Hegelian pattern. The root of Hegel's philosophy is that truth is to be found in a continual synthesis; an idea is presented, but truth is not there, nor is it in its opposite, but a nearer approach is to be found in a synthesis of the two contrary positions. And again this third term is not the truth but is only more nearly approached in the synthesis of itself and its opposite and so on. This is how theological truth has actually progressed in the Christian Church. The Antiochene school of Christology for instance with its protagonists Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius advocating the humanity of Jesus had not the whole truth; nor was the Alexandrian school of Christology, which opposed it, advocating the deity; a nearer approach to the truth was to be found in the resultant synthetic formula of Chalcedon 451 A.D. "very God and very man." Or again the Augustinian position that man's salvation is wholly due to the grace of God is not the whole truth; nor is its opponent Pelagianism with its notion that man's salvation is the result of his own efforts in imitation of the example of Jesus, but rather the truth is more nearly approximated to in the compromising view which persisted in the Church known as 'semi-Augustinianism.' And there is no doubt that a great deal of the strength of the Church of England has been due to the undoubted combination of the contrary positions of Calvinism and Arminianism.

We see then how a step nearer the truth is often obtained by this very process commonly expressed by the swing of a pendulum and how well it may be that the newer and more recent trends in theological thought are in very deed nearer to the truth than the contrary positions they combine, namely the Fundamentalist and Modernist, to name only two. For we must be well aware that this is an over-simplification. After all the immediate reaction to the liberalism of the 19th century was of course the revival of Calvinism in Barthianism against which this country again has reacted.

Before we examine in any coherent form the nature of the newer and growing dogmatic school of thought, let us look in a general way at the present trend of theological thought. Under the dominant liberal Protestant thought of the 19th century founded by Albrecht Ritschl it was customary to set the theology of the New Testament in a Greek mould. That way however has been superseded, the Greek has not wholly been dismissed but it is realised that the theology of the New Testament is chiefly Hebraic. This is not an academic question only, it is practically very important. On the face of it, of course, it is at once apparent that the New Testament is intelligible without a

knowledge of Greek philosophical thought categories. The categories of thought of Paul for example are Hebrew, that is to say the Bible is being seen once more as a complete whole. The Hebrew Old Testament is the necessary introduction to the New and this (not so much the Greek) constitutes the guiding principle to the interpretation of the New. We see then to-day not only a process of re-integration of the New Testament to which we shall make reference later, but indeed of the whole Bible.

But this change of emphasis has greater import than this, it alters the whole character of Christology. The God of Greek philosophy is  $\tau\omicron\ \delta\upsilon$ , the Absolute, the unchanging, something passive, a constant principle behind the changing phenomena of time. The God of the Hebrews on the other hand is an active person, One Who *calls* Abraham, Who *delivers* Israel from the bondage of Egypt, Who *summons* the prophets, Who *sends* into exile, Who *turns* captivities, One Who *does* things on behalf of His people. The fundamental difference in the resultant Christologies is obvious. For liberal theology with its Greek categories, the man Christ Jesus is the mirror par excellence of the unchanging God, he is the supreme revelation. For the newer outlook on the other hand with its Hebrew categories God has finally acted in Jesus so that the significance of the acts of Jesus is that they are the acts of God. And this is the crucial point; a revelation may be rejected, there is no finality about it, logically there is no reason why there should not be a second Jesus. But it is not so with an act, there is finality in an act for it brings about the conditions for which it was performed so that a repetition is no longer possible nor indeed is it required. Finality, then, that is the keynote of the newer theology, the product of interpretation in Hebrew forms. God has acted in Jesus and there is finality about His act.

All this has far-reaching repercussions. Great emphasis used to be laid on the fact that Jesus was the last term in a long series of preceding events. He was the end and the crown of all the long Old Testament process, He was the ideal to which the saints of old looked forward and in Him they were summed up. There is truth in this view but it obscures the essential feature of the Incarnation which is that if history can be represented as a horizontal line, then the Incarnation must be represented as a vertical line cutting across it. There is something other about this event, something unique, something unknown to any preceding or succeeding events, it is the divine breaking in on the human, or in other words, there is finality about it.

And so interest has arisen in what was the primitive preaching the  $\kappa\acute{\eta}\rho\upsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$ . From the Petrine speeches in the Acts and from the traditions Paul received, and says he received, it can most easily be gathered (but by no means here only but wherever we look) that the early Christian preaching was centred on this act of God in Christ, the death and the resurrection which produced certain results and had reference to the last day, the day of Judgment.

So we see over against Fundamentalism and over against Modernism a strong modern tendency towards conservatism in theology and it exists too in Biblical criticism. We are not to confuse this with the Fundamentalist position. The conservative trend seeks to conserve

all that is essential in the Fundamentalist view, but it uses Biblical Criticism, it is not unscientific. Yet it does *not*, like the Modernist school, look for a completely new dogmatic, it respects the past, it reveres orthodoxy, it sees value in tradition and—this is distinctive—it does not want like modernism so to have lengthened its lines of communication in order to meet the newer conditions of modern life that it gets out of touch with its base. No army can fight separate from its base, if its base is lost the army is lost. Christianity cannot live without its base. But what is that base? asks theology to-day. And answering its own question it says—It is the essential element in orthodoxy. There is in Christianity that without which it cannot claim the name, it is fundamental, it is basic, or to introduce the technical word now being used—it is ‘dogma.’

Let us now turn to examine not the content of dogma—for that would be impossible in one article—but the form of the dogma. Let us examine the newer and conservative trend of thought, under three heads, Revelation, Dogma, Theology.

First of all Revelation. The Roman Catholics describe this as the imparting of religious truths to men by God either directly or through an angel. This revelation is immediate and mediate (that is through Creation and His handiwork). There is therefore a supernatural revelation and a natural revelation or, to put it another way, revealed religion and natural religion.

Dr. Temple has frequently pointed out that on the Continent the great controversy between the Roman Church and the Protestant has not been a Eucharistic one as might be supposed, but is a controversy about whether or not there is such a distinction between natural and supernatural revelation. He himself says categorically ‘No, there is not.’ “What is needed” he says in his Gifford Lecture, “and what plainly comes to pass before our eyes is the deliberate and total repudiation of any distinction of spheres as belonging respectively to natural and revealed religion or Theology.” That needs a little explanation. In former days it was held that certain truths about God—as that He exists, that He is Creator, that He is the provident disposer of the world’s affairs—might be known in the light of natural reason but that certain further truths concerning Him as that He is three persons in One God, that He is incarnate in Jesus Christ, that He has redeemed us by the blood of His Cross, could only be made known by supernatural revelation to the eye of faith and could never be discovered by man’s natural reason.

This is the distinction between a natural and a revealed religion which nowadays is rejected. Logic can tell us nothing about God. Logic says “If A then B.” Logic argues from certain premises. What undeniable premises are there for the arguments for God’s existence? In any case the arguments for divine existence are too vague and the product of their reasoning is the Absolute not the Christian God and there is about as much connection between the two as between the square root of minus one and the sunrise, as one writer expresses it.

And this distinction between natural and revealed religion is rejected because it speaks of ‘truths of revelation’ and describes revelation as the imparting of religious truth, its customary phrase being “truths of revelation.” But how can truth and truths be revealed? Truth is

abstract and if God revealed truth as it really is it would be absolute. Could we apprehend absolute divine truth? God must become flesh and truth must be expressed and therefore imperfectly represented in human language if we are to understand.

So we come to our point. What is Revelation? Certainly not truths, they are the intellectual formulation of revelation, not revelation itself. What is revealed? Who reveals? It is God Who is revealed and God Who reveals. The subject and object of revelation are one. God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Christian doctrine therefore is the intellectual expression of the revelation of God Himself. And this revelation of God is as mediate as any other revelation of God in creation for Christ is Himself the Mediator.

Yet, of course, a distinction is asserted in the Christian faith. It is agreed God has revealed something of Himself to prophets, to philosophers, to poets. He has spoken to the prophets but in His Son He came, He has acted. The Incarnation then is the distinctive revelation, a revelation distinctive in kind from any other. It is not as if Christ's divinity were of a higher quality though of the same kind as that of the prophets and seers, it is distinctly other, it is the revelation of God distinctively; in Hebraic thought categories God is acting there—and here we may suppose we have come to the dividing line, the wall of partition between the Catholic faith on the one hand and the vague Christianised philosophies on the other, which offer themselves as the re-interpretation or as new dogmatic. Revelation then is of God and that supremely, uniquely and distinctively in the Incarnation.

So much for Revelation. What is dogma? To some the very word is an offence. They say there can be no static apprehension of truth—truth is for ever deepening. That is true; but some principles, some pre-suppositions like the law of contradiction can never be superseded, it is impossible for the thinking process to function without them. So too, if it were once true that Christ died for the sins of the world, it is always true, we cannot get along without it; however much interpretation may vary, that fact remains. This then is what is meant by 'dogma.' If dogma means only a theoretical explanation there will be no permanence in it, it may be superseded; but if dogma means spiritual fact then it cannot be superseded. And whatever and however insistent the demand may be for an undogmatic Christianity, this newer theological outlook of to-day will say—undogmatic Christianity is a contradiction.

But what is dogma? The Roman Church claims absolute finality for the statements of the Creed; even the cloak of infallibility extends to the words used to express the content. With this, of course, it is impossible to argue. But what is the Protestant answer, which rejecting an infallible Church necessarily rejects the infallibility of its statements? It is that dogma is the "Word of God," the Gospel; and Scripture, Creed and Theology have authority only as they express and convey that Word, that Gospel. The newer theology then has great reverence for the Bible, it has great reverence for the Creed, it respects the Fathers, and the older orthodox theologians, because they have conveyed in varying degree the Word of God, the essential Gospel, which is dogma. As regards these things it is conservative. And because it emphasises the Word, the Gospel, which constitute

dogma it is "dogmatic." We admit we have not defined what is the Gospel, that is impossible in one article, but what a paradox it would be if the Christian Church could not define its own Gospel.

So we come on to the third term, namely theology. What is theology and what is its relation to dogma? It may be expressed this way; dogma is the permanent element in the Christian faith and theology the transient. Theology is the intellectual interpretation of the Word—the Gospel. And the Gospel does not tell us simply what God is, it tells us what God has done. It records the mighty acts of God in Hebrew fashion, it can only be expressed in active verbs. God *sent*, He *came*, in Christ, He *reconciled*, He *took* our nature. And so it is that the Gospel can only be expressed in a story, the story of God's acts. That story is the essential, it is the Word, it is dogma; when we seek to explain, then we make theology.

So we have examined the Christian faith as it is being explained to-day with regard to its form. In short it is conservative, and we have examined it under three heads, Revelation, Dogma and Theology. This threefold stage has been illustrated by drawing attention to the poet in creation of some work. First there comes the blinding flash, the moment of inspiration, that is revelation. Next comes the arduous task of expressing that experience in language, which has to become the vehicle; necessarily something is lost in trying to transfer the revelation into language but choice is made of a suitable form and a poem results; it tries to capture the feeling as well as the idea at the moment of inspiration. The poem then is like dogma. Thirdly we have the paraphrase of the poem, enlarging upon it and explaining it—that is theology.

## Christian Education.

BY THE REV. R. PERFECT, M.A., CAMB.

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**L**ET us begin with an attempt to define terms. What is "Christian Education?" Is it the same thing as "Religious Education?"

Let it be noted that the latter is invariably the term employed in official or semi-official publications and pronouncements on the subject. Is there any essential difference between the two terms? Does the adjective "Religious" in this context mean as much as, or less than, the adjective "Christian?" This is not mere splitting of hairs. There is a growing interest in this subject, which the Press in particular seems keen to foster, and in many quarters the interest is hardening into a clamant demand for action. Yet some of the definitions of "Religious Education," which are being widely broadcast through various channels, can hardly be said to apply *pari passu* as definitions of "Christian Education." Standing by itself, without further qualification or definition, the term "Religious Education" is capable of being watered down to such a pathetic thinness of meaning that it becomes in time little distinct from "Moralistic