

THE INSPIRATION OF THE LITURGY.

I.

THE history of the Christian experience has lately been set forth with the help of enquiries centred upon the individual life¹. But this experience is realized in a corresponding environment, and can only be understood by reference to that environment. That is to say, the Christian tradition is more than a series of individual—and therefore subjective—appearances. I wish, then, to indicate as briefly as may be, one or two social and objective facts in the history of the Christian Church which bear most intimately upon the private experience. These facts will also lead us to ascribe less value to that private judgement which is now exalted beyond due measure².

There are two circumstances which call for special notice at the outset. There is, first, the community of feeling through which the harmonious and organized activity of the Church is made possible. This community of feeling is not completely explained when we have referred to the merely external similarity, which holds between the experiences of different individuals. There are reasons for holding that this community of feeling lies deeper; that, in other words, it rests upon a unity of life which transcends and includes the individual life. Such statements as these will doubtless appear extravagant and unscientific to some readers. There is not the opportunity now of producing the proofs. I will therefore take the liberty of referring to what I have already said about inspiration elsewhere³. This same term *inspiration* shall serve now to mark off this deeper aspect of the Christian experience, so far as it goes beyond the bare conditions of the individual life.

In the second place, the communication of feeling has for one

¹ Prof. W. James's important work upon *The Varieties of Religious Experience* avowedly pursues this method.

² For example, untrained private judgement is usually quite worthless in art.

³ *The Soul of a Christian* c. x.

of its main instruments the formula which expresses feeling, in a word, the statement of belief, the creed. But I want a more general category, and one less subject to misleading implications than this word 'creed'. Unfortunately the term which suggests itself, namely *tradition*, also carries with it partisan implications. Still, it will serve the purpose.

Now the inspiration and the tradition with which we are occupied, are something more than merely individual possessions. And it is because they reach beyond the individual that they are fitted in a special way to form the foundation of a common life. Here a warning is necessary. We must speak of inspiration in some sense when we are dealing with any of the great religions of the world. It is not, therefore, the *fact* of inspiration which distinguishes Christianity from Buddhism, or from Islam. It is the *object* to which the inspiration is directed, that is all important. Hence we must qualify these terms inspiration and tradition by something further. What they reach towards is the person of Jesus. It is the peculiar character of this person, therefore, that must be borne in mind when we set out to explain the peculiar character of the Christian experience. For the person of Jesus is not to be reduced to the ordinary categories of human nature. At least I shall assume this for the purpose of my argument. And here I will set up a distinction which is ultimate, and which, I fear, will prevent any general agreement being reached as to the psychology of the Christian life. *The Christian experience is only possible in its characteristic forms so long as men act and think as if the person of Jesus were human and something more.* That is to say we have a regulative idea, an idea, therefore, which is as incapable of proof as, say, the existence of God, for the simple reason that any proof can only proceed by begging the question. Hence there must always be a radical difference in the treatment of the history of the Christian experience, according as we do, or do not, apply this regulative idea. Nor can I expect that my treatment of the topic will satisfy those who fail to apply this regulative idea. At the same time, in marking out the area of difference, we also mark out the area of agreement. The Christian experience will conform to the general conditions of experience, although it will not be entirely accounted for by them.

There are many other instances of the same kind. For example, the chemist will try to satisfy in his investigations the principles of molecular physics, although chemistry is molecular physics and something more. In just the same way the student of the Christian experience will try to shew that his descriptions are not inconsistent with the ordinary canons of the human experience, although he will bear in mind the further implications of his subject. And so in the following pages I will try to set forth what I have to say, as far as possible, in such terms as may befit a purely historical treatment without bringing in the terms of a specially theological belief.

And yet such an attempt can only be partially successful. For the mere assumption that there is an objective element in the Christian experience will conduct us at once into the sphere of theology. It is this same objective element that has already led us to anticipate a theory of the person of Christ. And I fear that the attempt to explain the Christian experience, will be but a transparent veil for implications of a distinctly theological character.

Let us proceed now, however, to set out our subject in terms which shall take for granted as little as may be. In the first place, the Person of Jesus impressed His immediate followers in such a way that they formed themselves into a society animated and sustained by a common love and enthusiasm for Him. This enthusiasm and love has persisted in the Christian society from the beginning until the present, and it has manifested itself in certain special ways which are important for us now, because they concern the self-revelation of the Christian spirit as it spreads from the community to the individual. We will try to interpret the New Testament and the liturgy considered as the conscious utterance of the Christian spirit. For, as a matter of fact, the liturgy and then at a later date the sacred writings were the first things to present themselves to the external observer or the new convert. And his is the point of view from which we are starting.

In the next place, the consciousness of the Christian community, as we might expect, sets its object, the Person of Jesus, in a high and clear light. 'I know whom I have believed.' The watchword, or symbol of the Christian society consisted in

a series of definite propositions about the Person of Jesus. 'Tradition', says Harnack¹, 'in the strictest sense of the word consisted in the contents of the symbol for the time being.' And this is the sense in which we shall speak of tradition. It is the term which Paul uses of what his converts received from him. And the contrasted employment in the New Testament of the phrases 'traditions of the elders', 'traditions of men', ought not to discredit the proper use of the term.

II.

We will now proceed to consider the inspiration of the Christian society as disclosed most especially in the composition of the New Testament and of the liturgy. I do not say the inspiration of the New Testament. For the term inspiration, of course, can only be used of the writers of the books of the New Testament, and, as we shall see, the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament was something which they shared with the Christian society as a whole. Hence it is proper to speak of the inspiration of the Christian society as disclosed in the New Testament.

Jesus Himself left no written memorials. In view of the large part which the New Testament has played in the life of the Church and in the history of the world, it is also a striking circumstance that no saying of Jesus has been recorded which deals directly with the use of the New Testament. Hence it seems probable that the popular religion of to-day, so far as it consists in each man making up his own religion out of the New Testament, is unlike the Christianity of the lifetime of Jesus, and of the century which followed upon the death of Jesus. The convert, upon joining the rising young community, was admitted into a new order of life, and upon his baptism received a brief summary of the belief of the Church concerning her Founder. He had but little written guidance. The oral communication of the teacher took precedence of every other means of communication. 'Hold fast', says Paul, 'the traditions which you were taught through our word of mouth or our letters.' In this way the Church, speaking through her teachers, acted as the channel by which the life and example of Jesus became the possession

¹ *History of Dogma* (tr.) iii 209.

first of her immediate neighbours and contemporaries, and then of after ages. But at first there was nothing answering to the modern use of the New Testament.

Now this seems a plain statement of an obvious fact. But the full meaning of this fact is far from being obvious, and requires to be sought further. How was it that the life and the example of Jesus so captivated the imaginations and governed the wills of his contemporaries and the succeeding generations that their characters were re-created and, in a spiritual sense, they were born again? Our answer must take account of the context into which, so to speak, they were woven, of the past from which they sprang, of the future into which they were moving. The use of the Old Testament by the Church to shew how Jesus was the clue to the history of the Jewish race, was a parable of the way in which also He answered to the inherited impulses of the other parts of the ancient world. Jesus brought in a new era of the spirit; He did not bring in a temporal revolution. The antique world continued still for many generations to furnish the mould into which the life of the Church was cast. Overbeck's suggestive essay upon the attitude of the ancient Church to slavery may be called in to illustrate this fact¹. The Christian Church has never interfered in politics without going outside her proper domain, and so those popular writers who, like Dean Farrar, dwell upon the social and political deficiencies of ancient civilization, as though it was the first business of the Church to remedy them, fall into error as to the meaning of the early history of the Church. So far was the Christian Church from being in any sense a revolutionary organization, that it actually gave to the ancient world a fresh and crowning lease of life, and the world-dreams of an Alexander and a Julius received their profoundest fulfilment in the spiritual cosmopolitanism of the Nazarene. It was scarcely an accident that the inscription upon the cross was written in the three great languages of the ancient world. The break between the old and the new did not affect the more noble elements in Greek and Roman life, and, indeed, the Church has acted as the intermediary by which the invaluable legacy of ancient culture—its philosophy and art—has entered into the possessions of the modern world. Jesus came not to

¹ *Studien zur Geschichte der alten Kirche* i 185.

destroy but to fulfil; and the example of Jesus included in itself, and gave permanence to, what was most valuable in the heritage of the past. But it did more. It also furnished a prophecy of what was best in the future. Just as we have traced in the Christian ideal the nobler elements of Greek and Roman and Jewish antiquity, so in the rich complexity of the mind of Jesus there are foreshadowed—like the petals of the flower as yet enfolded in the bud—the successive chapters of the history of the Christian Church.

Now it was this spirit, that looked to the past and the future alike, which Jesus breathed upon his immediate disciples, and through them upon the after-world. Such a spirit has proved itself capable of absorbing into itself the most varied national and racial tendencies, and thereby of entering into and determining the succeeding stages of national and racial history. We see the spirit of Jesus permeating, first, the Jewish mind, and then, in a still more eminent degree, the Greek and the Roman mind. It spreads among the Egyptians, the Celts, the Teutons, the Slavs, in a manner which has only ceased to seem miraculous because it has become familiar. How strong such an impulse must have been in its origin! How all differences must have been fused at first into one burning flood of enthusiasm! Now when the intensity of the spiritual experience rises above a certain pitch, it is accompanied by certain phenomena, certain modes of self-expression. And these attain a unique character by which they are marked off from the expressions of those spiritual experiences which are of lesser degrees of intensity. Hence they are not always understood if they are measured by the ordinary standards. It is on these lines that we ought to approach the question of the inspiration of the New Testament. And for the sake of clearness I will try to state the principle in definite terms:—

At times of intellectual and spiritual exaltation not only do large ideas become the common possession of the multitude, but the power of expressing those ideas is also widely possessed, and thus the question of authorship can scarcely be solved in the same way as when inspiration is more sporadic in its distribution.

Since, as we have seen, the Christian experience is marked off from other experiences not by the *fact* of inspiration, but by the

object to which the inspired feelings are directed, we must expect to be able to illustrate the Christian experience by the closest parallels from other quarters, and, in particular, we will try to explain the origin of the New Testament. For here again we have a fact the familiarity of which blinds us to its special character. And this special character we may understand better in the light of some recent lucubrations about the Elizabethan literature. The attempt which has been made to shew that Shakespeare's plays and poems were written by another hand, rests simply on the ground of certain general resemblances of thought and expression. But these general resemblances of thought and expression are just the common characteristics of the age and country in which Shakespeare lived; and if instead of confining ourselves to Shakespeare, we continue our reading of the Elizabethan writers a little further, we shall still meet with similar turns of thought and expression. In order to be consistent, therefore, we shall be compelled to attribute to the hand which penned the works attributed to Shakespeare, the whole of the literature of the time. And there have not been wanting those who were bold enough to draw this perfectly logical and fantastic conclusion. Spenser, Marlowe, and the rest are thus, along with Shakespeare, the masks through which a single face looks down upon us.

The most illuminating discussion of Shakespeare's genius which has come under my notice, is contained in *The Mind of Man* by Mr. Gustav Spiller, who shews how largely Shakespeare drew upon what was a common stock of feelings, ideas, phrases. And there is one sentence in his book which I will borrow, and use it again for our special purpose. 'Shakespeare', says Mr. Spiller, 'stands for the genius of the Elizabethan era much more than for his own superiority.' In the same way we will say that the writers of the New Testament stand for the spirit common to the Christian Church much more than for their own superiority. Hence it is that so much of the early Christian literature is anonymous, or as good as anonymous. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* may serve to shew how high a level could be attained by writers who failed to leave even a name behind them. The strange belief that the writers of the New Testament were like clerks taking down from dictation the verbal utterances of

Another, is curiously revived in the fantastic theory of the Elizabethan literature that we have already noticed. If Lord Bacon were permitted for once to speak in his own person, he would perhaps use this popular theorizing as an illustration of 'idols'. 'We observe', he says, 'that idols are the deepest fallacies of the human mind: for they do not deceive in particulars as the rest by clouding and ensnaring the judgement; but from a corrupt predisposition or bad complexion of the mind, which distorts and infects all the anticipations of the understanding.' Such popular theories, however, do not gain wide acceptance without the admixture of an element of truth. Let us try to rescue this element of truth, and apply it to the origin of the New Testament, that is to say, to the conditions amid which the New Testament arose. In so doing we shall make a start towards the better understanding not only of the New Testament, but of the prophetic impulse generally. May we say that the New Testament is inspired so far as its writers shared in the common enthusiasm, and in the gifts which that enthusiasm conferred; the gifts of tongues, of prophecy, of exposition, in a word, the spiritual gifts?

Here then we meet with a very striking incidental confirmation of the principle which we established a short time since. We are not only enabled to understand better the prevalent tone of feeling and language which reigns throughout the New Testament: we can solve a problem which has always exercised the interpreters of the New Testament, although they do not say much about it. The gift of tongues and those other gifts belong to the general state of excitement which gave birth to the New Testament. To use a physiological expression, there was an abnormal excitation of the speech centres, which accompanied the general disturbance of consciousness. Similar conditions are clearly manifested in those Elizabethan gifts of utterance which are scarcely less wonderful than those of the early church. And so it seems reasonable to regard the strange behaviour of Paul and his correspondents, as a particular instance of the general excitement which accompanied the rise of the Church, and therefore as a strict corollary to the rise of the early Christian literature.

Now so far as this excitement was confined strictly within the

limits of the common life, it expressed itself in the growth of the *liturgy*; so far as it was more individual in character it took the form of *apocalyptic compositions*. Hence we must regard the New Testament as holding a middle place between the vast mass of apocalyptic compositions on the one hand, and the liturgical forms on the other. Thus we gain not only a theory of the growth of the canonical scriptures, but also a partial explanation of these other scarcely less important products of the Christian spirit.

To take the apocalyptic literature first, Harnack scarcely does justice to the general sincerity of the earliest times when he says that the first Christian century was distinguished, among other things 'by a quite unique literature in which were manufactured facts for the past and the future, and which did not submit to the usual literary rules and forms but came forward with the loftiest pretensions'¹. So far is this from being the case, that, wonderful to relate, the *Apocalypse of John* is the only representative of this kind which found its way into the canon, and this only after a prolonged struggle. It is one of the many tokens of the sober judgement of the authorities of the early church that it should be so, and I know of no circumstance which may more properly incline us towards a high estimate of their historical sense. For the amount of the apocalyptic literature and its popularity was enormous. It revived with each fresh persecution. Each succeeding attack roused the enthusiasm of the martyr Church to fresh expressions. The persecution of Diocletian—the final baptism of blood and fire—was only like its predecessors when it drove the persecuted to revive and to imitate those Jewish stories of *Bel and the Dragon*, of the *Three Children*, which had supported Jewish faith centuries before under the oppression of Antiochus. It is a perverse understatement to compare these and similar compositions with the modern religious novel. They are in great part the cries of anguish and yet of triumph which were wrung from the Christian society as it passed through the last moments of stress on to the crowning victory. The churches of Rome and Alexandria sealed their confessions with the seal of martyrdom. It is therefore a fit ending for the New Testament that the last

¹ *History of Dogma* (tr.) i 142.

book in it should be a manual for martyrs. *These are they which came out of great tribulation.*

The other gift was not less wonderful. It produced the liturgy. The importance of this circumstance for the history of the Church can scarcely be exaggerated. For, as we shall see, it was for a long time through the liturgy rather than through the New Testament that the traditional estimate of the Person of Christ was guarded. The New Testament itself, indeed, contains some traces of the prayers, hymns, and confessions of faith which formed the substance of the stated worship. And to that extent it takes for granted a certain liturgical development. I do not understand, however, why in this connexion reference should be made only to the one or two incidental remarks contained in St Paul's letters, and why the canticles which are preserved in St Luke's gospel should not also be quoted. They may very well proceed in part from the persons to whom they are attributed. The art of writing psalms was still alive among the Jews down to the Christian era. And I find no difficulty in supposing that the mother of Jesus, who hid so many things in her heart, was a poetess and the authoress of the *Magnificat*. The composition of prayers and 'spiritual songs' at the beginning of the Christian history, was repeated at the German Reformation in the hymns of Luther and of the *Lyra Germanica*; the Elizabethan age furnished the beautiful forms of the collects of the Anglican liturgy and the incomparable style of the Authorized Version; the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century spoke in the hymns of Wesley; the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century, in the verses of Newman and the *Christian Year*. But no later compositions can hope to surpass the first hymns and prayers and confessions of faith as the immediate outcome of the Christian spirit.

III.

We have thus attempted to consider the inspiration of the early church as a fact capable of positive statement. We can trace its features and measure its extent; as we can trace and measure other historical events. It is not meant, of course, that we have exhausted the meanings of this inspiration when we have referred it to its historical setting. But this

is a matter for further enquiries which lie beyond our present scope.

Let us now return to the other part of our subject, *tradition*, and consider very briefly the terms in which the Church handed on the standard of belief, which was also in effect the standard of feeling. The Church from time to time became agreed in the main that there were limits beyond which she no longer recognized her own special temperament. It became clear that absolute freedom of speculation and absolute licence of temperament and emotion were inconsistent with the maintenance of definite standards of speculation and of emotion. Hence to upbraid the Church for setting up a canon of right thinking or orthodoxy is beside the mark. The Church was driven to this course by the instinct of self-preservation. The student may lament or accept the necessity of fixed standards. But one thing is quite certain. The controversialists of the early centuries knew what they were talking about, when they declared that there were doctrines by which the Church will stand or fall. This consideration quite explains the hesitation with which changes have been admitted, even in the external circumstances of the life of the Church ; and, at the same time, it has been too much overlooked by those thinkers of each age who have sought to remould Christian tradition in conformity with the standards of each age. Hence the genuine reformation of the Church in doctrine or practice must always come from within, although the impulse to such reformation may very well originate outside her borders. And so it seems to me that the function of the psychologist must be carefully distinguished from that of the critic of dogma. His office will be rather to describe, than to suggest possible changes in the subject-matter of his descriptions.

If then a purely subjective criticism leads to attempts at reconstruction of the Christian ideal, attempts which are doomed to failure beforehand, so, on the other hand, those who take the New Testament out of its context and consider it apart from the institutions of the Church throw the Christian ideal out of its historical perspective. Now this is an error which seems to be current not only among the general public, but also among professed students. There is too exclusive a preoccupation with books, a preoccupation which rises in some quarters to a positive

prejudice against any other source of information. The evidence of liturgical usage, of custom, of Christian art, is in the main ignored. For example, the earliest monuments of the Roman catacombs, the inscriptions, the paintings, go back to the first century, that is to the lifetime of some of the apostles. And the slightness of such archaeological evidence is balanced by the certainty with which it records a contemporary utterance. Critics like Strauss may dissolve the figure of Jesus into myth, or with Schmiedel leave Him almost speechless, but the catacombs take us into the presence, or at least the handiwork, of the first generation of his followers, and we find ourselves in a religious atmosphere, apparently continuous with that of the Gospels. Yet it has taken thirty years for the work of de Rossi to obtain recognition in England, and even still to repeat his statements is to incur the reproach of Roman partisanship. If then the evidence of Christian art is to be weighed, so also must the evidence which is furnished by the liturgy. The arrangement of the liturgy is curiously dominated by dogmatic presuppositions, a fact of which Pliny's famous sentence is a striking symbol. 'To sing hymns in antiphon to Christ as though to God' may well stand for a general account of the liturgy. Just as Roman and Greek history have been interpreted anew in the light of archaeological and other extra-literary evidence, so the history of the Christian Church is to be interpreted anew in the light of liturgical and archaeological evidence. And just as the critical methods which at first seemed to throw grave doubts upon the Troy and Mycenae of Agamemnon and Priam, and the Rome of Romulus, have in the end re-established the old traditions, if not in detail yet in substance; so in a more eminent degree has it been with the apostolic age. Purely literary speculation dissolved into air the presence and martyrdom of Peter at Rome, but the archaeologist can almost trace his footsteps side by side with those of Paul. We can look now upon the facts of the past in a stereoscopic manner, combining in one focus the double insight which is given by the Christian literature on the one hand, and by Christian institutions and art on the other. Perhaps you say, 'What has this to do with psychological study?' I answer, very little so long as psychology confines itself to a bare description of the individual Christian life. But when it steps

outside that limit, it must proceed not less scientifically than when it attempts to portray the character of any other social organism.

And now to bring this paper to a conclusion; I will try to shew that we have been really in touch with the actual current of the life of the early church. There are two salient circumstances of which every theory must take some account. There is the primacy of the Roman Church on the one hand, and on the other the pre-eminent place occupied by the Eucharist. Unless we can exhibit these two facts in some sort of relation to what has already been advanced, our attempt to formulate the history of the Christian experience in psychological terms must be considered a failure.

And first as to the Roman Church. The *de facto* primacy of the Roman Church was based not only upon the political primacy of the ancient capital, but also upon a certain sobriety of judgement and upon the high degree of practical wisdom which characterized the Roman mind. As Harnack has pointed out, the recognition of this *de facto* primacy of the Roman Church in the early centuries is not necessarily implicated with the recognition of the *de iure* primacy of the Roman bishop. And what I am going to say is not calculated to serve the purposes of Roman controversialists. Here again I will draw upon Harnack. Whether it be Dionysius of Rome writing about Dionysius of Alexandria, or Leo I attempting to compose the monophysite controversy, or Agatho writing to the emperor—'We are astonished', he says¹, 'at the close affinity of the three manifestoes. The three popes did not trouble themselves about proofs or arguments, but fixed their attention solely on the consequences of disputed doctrines. Starting with these doctrines they refuted doctrines of the right and left, and simply fixed a middle theory which existed merely in words, for it was self-contradictory. This they grounded formally on their ancient creed without even attempting to argue out the connexion: one God, Father, Son, and Spirit; one person, perfect God and perfect man; one person, two wills. . . . Their religious interest centred in the God Jesus, who had assumed the *substantia humana*.'

¹ *History of Dogma* (tr.) iii 94

In these sentences Harnack furnishes us with a principle which we may lay down as follows:—*The policy of the Roman bishops in doctrinal matters was not to originate but to regulate. Jesus was to be regarded as perfect God and perfect man. And no inference was to be permitted which conflicted with either of these propositions.*

That is to say, the guidance of Rome in matters of doctrine was purely a negative one at first. And we can mark it off with the utmost clearness from that later and positive procedure which has led to the elaborate creed of Pope Pius V, and to the decrees of 1854 and 1870. The earliest inspiration of the Church and its teachers in this respect seems to resemble the daemon of Socrates; it interferes to restrain from error, but not to suggest positive action. Hence the authority of the Roman Church was recognized at first in so far as it confined itself to guarding the tradition in the sense of which we have spoken. But Harnack scarcely does justice to the spirit of compromise which he traces at Rome. It is not the mere fact of compromise that explains its occasional success as a policy. Where two opposing parties are absolutely divided, the result of a conflict must be in the end the complete victory of the one side, and the complete defeat of the other. A compromise succeeds so far as there is a great central body of feeling and opinion to which expression is given. The Roman policy satisfied the needs of the great mass of the Church. Let us try to find a more definite expression for this fact.

The life and example of Jesus communicated to the young community an enthusiasm and an inspiration which was passed on from the first to the second generation of believers, not in the form of Christian scriptures, but by word of mouth. 'The baptismal confession was imparted to the catechumens by word of mouth, and this procedure was confirmed by the subsequent conception of the *disciplina arcani*: hence written records are not found till pretty late.'¹ Thus the earliest doctrines about the person of Jesus could not have been deduced from the New Testament. On the other hand, these doctrines, already existing and formulated in the earliest creeds, determined the Church in selecting those writings which should be regarded as canonical.

¹ Möller *History of the Christian Church* (tr.) i 257.

But the creed must not be separated from the common worship of the Church, and especially from the most important part of the common worship, the Eucharist. Through possession of the creed the catechumen was initiated into the full privileges of the Christian society, that is to say, into participation of the body and blood of Christ¹. And the high estimate of the person of Jesus which was declared in the creed, must not be separated from the worship of Him which was implied in the whole form of the ceremonial. The arrangement of the liturgy represented the mysterious approach of a divine presence to the worshipper. A very large proportion of the earliest monuments of Christian art, many of them not later than the second century, bear testimony both to the large place occupied in the life of the Church by the Eucharist, and to the mystical interpretation of the meal². Hence when we ask, What was the reason why the traditional interpretation of the person of Jesus was maintained so persistently? we are bound to take account of the influence of the forms of worship. *Lex orandi lex credendi*. The law of prayer is also the law of belief. Hence we arrive at our concluding principle. *The idea of the person of Jesus as of perfect God and perfect man, was nourished upon the liturgy in general and the Eucharist in particular.*

Thus the Roman primacy and the high doctrine of the Eucharist have a meaning for the history of the whole Christian Church, in so far as the declarations of the Roman bishops secured the twofold view of the person of Jesus, and the Eucharistic symbolism maintained the feeling of the incorporation of the Church in a divine body. In the light of this, I do not feel much confidence in any attempt to restate the Christian ideal which leaves out of account the functions which the leading doctrines of the Church have actually fulfilled in the past. No textual or higher criticism of the New Testament really affects the authority of the most ancient creed. On the other hand, it seems to be generally admitted now that the form of the New Testament books, as we have them, was not attained until a certain amount of editing had been undergone. In other words, the men who gave us the books of the New Testament in their

¹ 1 Cor. xi 29.

² Lowrie *Christian Art and Archaeology* 223 ff.

present form, were members of the society which had already elaborated Christian doctrine to the point at which we have traced it. Hence it seems doubtful whether any historical criticism of the New Testament, can ever get behind the standpoint of the Church of the second century. We may accept, or we may reject, tradition; we cannot hope to remould it to any private interpretation.¹

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¹ 2 Peter i 20.