

THE WORK OF CHRIST

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PREFACE

THESE chapters need to have it said that they were given as extempore lectures from rough notes to a gathering, largely of young ministers, in connection with Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan's annual conference at Mundesley, Norfolk. They were taken down in shorthand and then carefully revised. They took place in July, 1909, immediately after the delivery of my Congregational Lecture on the *Person and Place of Christ*, which they supplement—especially when taken with my *Cruciality of the Cross* a few months before. It will be seen from the conditions that the book cannot pretend to be more than a higher kind of popularisation, though this is less true of the two last chapters, which have been more worked over. The style approaches in parts a conversational familiarity which would have been out of place in addressing theological experts. And as some of the ideas are unfamiliar I have not been too careful to avoid repetition. My hope is to be of some use to those vi ministers who are still at a stage when they are seeking more footing on such matters than they have been provided with in mere Biblical or Historical Theology. There is no region where religion becomes so quickly theology as in dealing with the work of Christ. No doctrine takes us so straight to the heart of things, or so forces on us a discussion of the merits of the case, the dogmatic of it, as distinct from its scriptural or its ecclesiastical career. No doctrine draws so directly on the personal religion of sinful men, and none, therefore, is open to so much change in the course of the Church's thought upon its growing faith and life. Thus when we consider that here we are at once where the form may change most in time and yet the feet be most firmly set for eternity, we realise how difficult and delicate our task must be. And we are made to feel as if the due book on such a theme could only be written from behind the veil with the most precious blood that ever flowed in human veins.

We are in a time when a spirituality without positive content seems attractive to many minds. And the numbers may grow of those favouring an undogmatic Christianity which is without apostolic or evangelical substance, but cultivates a certain emulsion of sympathetic mysticism, intuitionist belief, and benevolent action. Among lay minds of a devout and social but impatiently practical habit, this is not unlikely to spread; and particularly among those whose public interests get the upper hand of ethical and historical insight and denude their religion of most of the reflection it demands. vii

Upon undogmatic, undenominational religion no Church can live. With mere spirituality the Church has not much directly to do; it is but a subjective thing; and its favour with many may be but another phase of the uncomprehending popular reverence (not to say superstition) for the recluse religionist, the mysterious ecstatic, and the ascetic pietist. What Christian faith and the Christian Church have to do with is *holy* spirituality the spirituality of the Holy Spirit of our Redemption. The Christian revelation is not “God is a spirit,” nor is it “God is love.” Each of these great words is now much used to discredit the more positive faith from whose midst John wrote them down. Herein is love, not in affection but in propitiation (1 John iv. 10). Would Paul ever have written 1 Cor. xiii. if it had been revealed to him that it was going to be turned against Rom. iii. 25? And what would his language have been to those who abused that chapter so? Christian faith is neither spirituality nor charity. Its revelation is the holiness in judgment of the spiritual and loving God. Love if only divine as it is holy; and spirituality is Christian only as it meets the conditions of Holy Love in the way the Cross did, as the crisis of holy judgment and holy grace. If the Cross is not simply a manner of religion but the object of our religion and the site of revelation, then it stands there above all to effect God’s holiness, and not to concentrate man’s self-sacrifice. And except in the Cross we have no guarantee for the supreme thing, the divine thing, in God, which is the changeless reality and irresistible sovereignty of His Holy Love. viii

It is upon such faith alone, given by the Cross alone, that a Church can live—upon the faith that founded it—upon a positive New Testament Gospel. Of that Gospel the Church is the trustee. And the Church betrays its trust and throws its life and its Lord away when it says, “Be beautifully spiritual and believe as you like,” or “Do blessed good and think as you please.” There is a timely saying of that searching Christian genius Kierkegaard—the great and melancholy Dane in whom Hamlet was mastered by Christ: ix

“For long the tactics have been: use every means to move as many as

you can—to move everybody if possible to enter Christianity. Do not be too curious whether what they enter *is* Christianity. My tactics have been, with God's help, to use every means to make it clear what the demand of Christianity really is—if not one entered it.”

The statement is extreme; but that way lies the Church's salvation in its anti-Nicene relation to the world, its pre-Constantinian, non-established, relation to the world, and devotion to the Word. Society is hopeless except for the Church. And the Church has nothing to live on but the Cross that faces and overcomes the world. It cannot live on a cross which is on easy terms with the world as the apotheosis of all its aesthetic religion, or the classic of all its ethical intuition. The work of Christ, rightly understood, is the final spiritual condition of all the work we may aspire to do in converting society to the kingdom of God.

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Chapter 1

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S SACRIFICE AND MAN'S

WHAT I am going to say is not directly unto edification, but indirectly it is so most certainly. Directly it is rather for that instruction which is a need in our Christian life as essential as edification. We cannot do without either. On the one hand instruction with no idea of edification at all becomes mere academical discourse. It may begin anywhere and it may end anywhere. On the other hand, edification without instruction very soon becomes a feeble and ineffective thing. I think a great many of us would be agreed that part of the poverty and weakness of the Church at the present moment is due to the fact that edification has been pursued to the neglect of instruction. We have been a little too prone to dwell upon the simple side of the gospel. All our capital is in small circulation. We have not put by a reserve, as it were. And 4 therefore the simplicity itself has become unsettled and ineffectual, confused and confusing.

I ask your attention to certain aspects of our Christian faith which perhaps do not lie immediately upon the surface, but which are yet the condition of the Church's continued energy and success in the world. I suppose there is nobody here who does not believe in the Church. At any rate, what I propose to say will be said entirely from that standpoint. We believe in the Holy Catholic Church. My contention would be that, apart from such a position as I desire to bring to your notice—some real apostolic belief in the real work of Jesus Christ—apart from that no Church can continue to exist. That is

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the point of view which I take at the outset. The Church is precious, not in itself, but because of God's purpose with it. It is there because of what God has done for it. It is there, more particularly, because of what Christ has done, and done in history. It is there solely to serve the Gospel.

It is impossible not to observe at the present day that the Church is under a cloud. You cannot take any division of it, in any country of the world, without feeling that that is so. Therefore I will begin by making quite a bold statement; and I should be quite prepared, given time and opportunity, to devote a whole week to making it good. The statement is that the Church of Christ is the greatest and finest product of human history. It is the greatest thing in the universe. That is in complete defiance of the general view and tendency of society at the present moment. I say the Church is the greatest and finest product of human history; because it is not really a product of human history, but the product of the Holy Spirit within history. It stands for the new creation, the New Humanity, and it has that in trust. The man who has a slight acquaintance with history is ready to bridle at a statement like that. He says: "Consider what the Roman Church has done; consider how obscurantist many sections of the Protestant Church are; consider the ineffectual position of the Church in modern civilisation—and what nonsense to talk about the Church as the greatest and finest product of human history!" True enough, the authority of the Church is failing in many quarters. And that does not mean only the external authority of what you might call a statutory Church, a great institutional Church, a great organised Church like Rome, for example. It means much more than that. It means that the authority of the whole Church is weakened in respect of the inward and spiritual matter which it contains and preaches, and which makes it what it is. The Church is there as the vehicle of the power of the Holy Ghost and of the authority of the saving God—a God, that is, who is saving not groups here and there, but the whole of human society. But a spiritual authority for man altogether is at a discount. Perhaps we have brought that in some measure upon ourselves. Perhaps, too, it was historically necessary. But, necessary or not, it is a matter of fact that our Protestantism has developed often into a masterless individualism which is as deadly to Christian life as an over-organised institution like Rome. Many spiritual people to-day find it difficult to make their choice between the two extremes. Without going into the historic causes of the situation, let us recognise the situation. Spiritual authority, especially that of the Church, is for the time being at a great discount.

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The Church is valuable as the organ of Christian grace, and truth, and power. But what do we find offered us in place of the Church? Those 7 who attack the Church most seriously, and disbelieve in it most thoroughly, are not proposing simply to level the Church to the ground in the sense of destroying any religious society. What they want to do is to put some other kind of society in the place of the Church. For they say, as we all say, that it is impossible for religion, certainly impossible for Christianity, to exist without a social body in which it is cultivated and has its effect. Therefore, those who are opposed to the Church most bitterly are yet not prepared to make a total desert. But they put all kinds of organisations, fancy organisations and fancy religions, in its place. Take the great movement in the direction of Socialism. Take the Socialist programmes that you find so plentifully everywhere. What do these various organisations mean? What do all these organisations mean which profess to embody human brotherhood, and are represented by Trades Unions, Cooperation, Fraternities, Guilds, Socialisms? What is it they all confess? That some social vehicle there must be. You cannot promote Anarchy itself without associations for the purpose. So that the very existence of these rival organisations is a confession of the one fundamental principle of the Church, namely, that the human ideal, that 8 religion in the true sense of the word, cannot do without a social habitation. They put in their own way what we put in our way (and we think a better way), that there must be a Church builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. Our individualisms have been troubling and weakening us so much that everybody is looking away to some form of human life which shall have the advantages of individualism without its perils. The pietistic form of individualism did in its day great service. But it is out of date. Rationalistic individualism, again, taking shape in political radicalism, has done good work in its day. That also seems going out of date. The value of the new movement is its—shall I say—solidarity; which is a confession of that social, fraternal principle which finds its consummation really, and its power only, in the Church of Christ.

When we look at these rival organisations (and they are many, and some will occur to you which I have not named), we can, I think, gather most of them under one head. In contrast with the Church the various social forms that are offered to us to-day would build society upon a natural basis, the basis of natural brotherhood, natural humanity, natural goodness—on 9

human nature. And the issue between the Church and the chief rivals of the Church is an issue between society upon this natural basis, and society upon a supernatural basis. Our Christian belief is based upon the work of Christ; and we hold that human society can only continue to exist in final unity upon that same supernatural basis. It is an issue, therefore, between human nature deified and human nature saved; between mere sympathy and faith—faith taken in a quite positive and definite sense. We think that a brotherhood of mere sympathy, however warm it can be at a particular moment, has no stay in it, no eternal promise. The eternal promise is with supernatural faith. Do you ever believe otherwise? I hope you have been so tempted; because having got over it you will be very much better for having gone through it. I wish much more of our belief had gone through troubled scenes and come to its rest; we should make far greater impression upon men if we gave them to feel we had fought our way to the peace and power we have. Well, were you ever tempted to believe that Christianity is just human nature at its best? That is the most powerful and dangerous plea that is put forward just now in challenge of our Christian position and Church. Is 10 the Kingdom of God just our natural spirituality and altruism developed? Is it just the spirit of religion or self-sacrifice, which you often find in human nature, developed to its highest? Is that the Kingdom of God? I trust you believe not—that human nature is not capable, by all the finest sacrifices it might develop, of saving, of ensuring itself, and setting up the Kingdom of God. Take the best side of human nature, that side which moves men to unselfishness and sacrifice, the side that comes out in many a heroic battle, in the silent battles of our civilisation, where the victims get no applause and no reputation for their heroism whatever. Take the best side of human nature, illustrated in every coalpit accident and every such thing, in countless quiet homes of poverty, where lives are being worked down to the bone and ground to death toiling and slaving for others. Take the vast mass of fatherhood and motherhood living for the children only. Take that best side of human nature, make the most of it, and then put this question: “How does man’s noblest work differ from Christ’s great work?” That is the question to which I desire to attract your attention to-day. How does man’s best work differ 11 from Christ’s great work?

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Let me begin with a story which was reported in the Belgian papers some years ago.

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Two passenger trains were coming in opposite directions at full speed. As they approached the station, it was found the levers would not work, owing to the frost, and the points could not be set to clear the trains of each other. A catastrophe seemed to be inevitable; when a signalman threw himself flat between the rails, and with his hands held the tie-rod in such a way that the points were properly set and kept; and he remained thus while the train thundered over him, in great danger of having his head carried away by the low-hung gear of the Westinghouse brake. When the train had passed, he quietly rose and returned to his work.

I offer you some reflections on this incident. It is the kind of incident that may be multiplied indefinitely. I offer you certain reflections, first, on some of its analogies with Christ's work, and secondly, on some of its differences.

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1. This man, in a very true sense, died and rose again. His soul went through what he would have gone through if he had never risen from the track. He gave himself; and that is all a man can give at last. His deed had the moral value which it would have had if he had lost his life. He laid it down, but it did not please God to take it. Like Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, it was complete and acceptable, even though not accepted. The man's rising from the ground—was it not really a resurrection from the dead? It was not simply a return to his post. He went back another man. He went back a heavenlier man. He had died and risen, just as if he had been called, and had gone, to God's presence could he but remain there. This is a death and rising again possible to us all. If the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ do not end in producing that kind of thing amongst us, then it is not the power of God unto salvation. These moral deaths and resurrections are what make men of us. "In deaths oft." That is the first point. 12

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2. The second point is this. Not one of the passengers in either of those trains knew until they read it what had been done for them, nor to whom they owed their lives. It is so with the whole world. To-day it owes its existence, in a way it but poorly understands, to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the permanent element in Christianity—the Cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And yet it is nothing to all them that 13

pass by. Under the feet of those travellers in Belgium there had taken place one of those deeds that are the very soul and glory of life, and they had no idea of it. Perhaps some of them were at the very moment grumbling at the staff of the railway for some small grievance or other. It is useful to remember, when we are inclined to grumble thus, what an amount of devotion to duty goes to make it possible for us to travel as safely as we do—far more than can be acknowledged by the payment of a wage. These people were ploughing along in safety over one of the railway staff lying in a living grave. I say it is so with the whole civilised world. Its progress is like that of the train; it seldom stops to think that its safety is owing to a divine death and resurrection, much more than heroic. The safety of that train was not due to the mechanism. The mechanism had gone wrong. It was not due to organisation, or to work done from fear of punishment. Heroic duty raised to martyrdom saved the whole train. And the world's progress is saved to-day because of a death and resurrection of which it knows little and mostly cares 14 to know less. "*Propter Jesum non quærimus Jesum.*" The success of Christ hides Him. It is the death of Christ that is the chief condition of modern progress. It is not civilisation that keeps civilisation safe and progressive. It is that power which was in Jesus Christ and culminated in His death and resurrection. When people read the Bible, and get behind the Bible, and that principle comes home to them, it may sometimes be like the shock that those travellers would receive when they read in the newspaper of their risk and deliverance.

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3. Another point. And I am now coming on to the difference. This man died for people who would thrill with the sense of what they owed him as soon as they read about it. His act appeals to the instinct which is ready to spring to life in almost every breast. You felt the response at once when I told you the story. Some of you may have even felt it keenly. Do you ever feel as keenly about the devoted death of Christ? Perhaps you never have. You have believed it, of course, but it never came home to you and gripped you as the stories of the kind I instance do. You see the difference between Christ's death and every case of human heroism. I am moving to answer 15 that question I put a moment ago as to whether the development of the best in human nature would ever give us the work of Christ and the Kingdom of God. I have been illustrating one of the finest things in human nature, and

I am asking whether, if that were multiplied indefinitely, we should yet have the effect which is produced by the death of Christ, or which is still to be produced by it in God's purpose. No, there is a difference between Christ's death and every case of heroism. Christ's was a death on behalf of people within whom the power of responding had to be created. Everybody thrills to that story I told you, and to every similar story. The power of response is lying there in the human heart ready it only needs to be touched. There is in human nature a battery charged with admiration for such things; you have only to put your knuckle to it and out comes the spark. But when we are dealing with the death of Christ we are in another position. Christ's was a death on behalf of people in whom the power of responding had to be created. We are all afraid of death, and rise to the man who delivers us from it. But we are not afraid of that worse thing than death from which Christ came to deliver us. Christ's death was not a case of heroism simply, it was 16 a case of redemption. It acted upon dull and dead hearts. It was a death which had to evoke a feeling not only latent but paralysed, not only asleep but dead. What does Paul say? "While we were yet without strength, Christ died for us"—without power, without feeling, as the full meaning is.

Let me illustrate. Take a poet like Wordsworth. When he began to publish his poetry he was received, just as Browning was received later, with ridicule and contempt. The greatest critic of the time began an article in the leading critical organ of the day by saying, "This will never do." But it has done; and it has done for Jeffrey's critical reputation. Lord Jeffrey wrote himself down as one who was incapable of gauging the future, however much he might be capable of understanding the literature of the past. Some of you may remember—I remember perfectly well—the same kind of thing in the penny papers about Browning when he was fighting for recognition. I remember, when I was a student, reading articles in luminaries like *The Standard* which sneered and jeered at Browning, just as smaller men to-day would sneer at men of like originality. But Wordsworth and Browning have 17 conquered. I take another case. Turner was assailed with even more ridicule when he exposed his works to the British public. What would have happened to Turner if Ruskin had not arisen to be his prophet I do not know. His pictures might not even have been mouldering in the cellars of the National Gallery. They might have been selling at little second-hand shops in back streets for ten shillings to any one who had eyes in his head. Wordsworth, Browning, and Turner were all people of such original and unprecedented genius that there was no taste and interest for them when they appeared;

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they had to create the very power of understanding themselves. A poet of less original genius, a great genius but less of a genius, like Tennyson, comes along, and he writes about the "May Queen" and "The Northern Farmer," and all those simple, elementary things which immediately fetch the handkerchiefs out. Now no doubt to do that properly takes a certain amount of genius. But it taps the prompt and fluent emotions; and the misfortune is that kind of work is easily counterfeited and abused by those who wish to exploit our feelings rather than exalt them. It is a more easy kind of thing than was done by those great geniuses I first named. Original poets like Wordsworth 18 and Browning had to create the taste for their work.

Now in like manner Christ had to make the soul which should respond to Him and understand Him. He had to create the very capacity for response. And that is where we are compelled to recognise the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well as the doctrine of the Saviour. We are always told that faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The reason why we are told that, and must be told it, lies in the direction I have indicated. The death of Christ had not simply to touch like heroism, but it had to redeem us into power of feeling its own worth. Christ had to save us from what we were too far gone to feel. Just as the man choked with damp in a mine, or a man going to sleep in arctic cold, does not realise his danger, and the sense of danger has to be created within him, so the violent action of the Spirit takes men by force. The death of Christ must call up more than a responsive feeling. It is not satisfied with affecting our heart. That is mere impressionism. It is very easy to impress an audience. Every preacher knows that there is nothing more simple than to produce tears. You have only to tell a certain number of stories about dying children, lifeboats, fire escapes, and so on, and you can make people thrill. But the thrill is neither here nor 19 there. What is the thrill going to end in? What is the meaning of the thrill for life? If it is not ending as it should, and not ending for life, it is doing harm, not good, because it is sealing the springs of feeling and searing the power of the spiritual life.

What the work of Christ requires is the tribute not of our admiration or even gratitude, not of our impressions or our thrills, but of ourselves and our shame. Now we are coming to the crux of the matter—the tribute of our shame. That death had to make new men of us. It had to turn us not from potential friends to actual, but from enemies into friends. It had not merely to touch a spring of slumbering friendship. There was a new creation. The love of God—I quote Paul, who did understand something

of these things—the love of God is not merely evoked within us, it is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.” That is a very different thing from simply having the reservoir of natural feeling tapped. The death of Christ had to do with our sin and not with our sluggishness. It had to deal with our active hostility, and not simply with the passive dullness of our hearts. Our hostility—that is what the easy-going people cannot be brought to recognise. That is what the shallow optimists, who think we can now dispense with emphasis on the death of Christ, feel themselves able to do—to ignore the fact that the human heart is enmity against God, against a God who makes demands upon it; who goes so far as to make demands for the whole, the absolute obedience of self. Human nature puts its back up against that. That is what Paul means when he speaks about human nature, the natural man the carnal man is a bad translation—being enmity against God. Man will cling to the last rag of his self-respect. He does not part with that when he thrills, admires, sympathises; but he does when he has to give up his whole self in the obedience of faith. How much self-respect do you think Paul had left in him when he went into Damascus? Christ, with the demand for saving obedience, arouses antagonism in the human heart. And so will the Church that is faithful to Him. You hear people of the type I have been speaking about saying, If only the Church had been true to Christ's message it would have done wonders for the world. If only Christ were preached and practised in all His simplicity to the world, how fast Christianity would spread. Would it? Do you really find that the deeper you get into Christ and the meaning of His demands Christianity spreads faster in your heart? Is it not very much the other way? When it comes to close quarters you have actually to be got down and broken, that the old man may be pulverised and the new man created from the dust. Therefore when we hear people abusing the Church and its history the first thing we have to say is, Yes, there is a great deal too much truth in what you say, but there is also a greater truth which you are not allowing for, and it is this. One reason why the Church has been so slow in its progress in mankind and its effect on human history is because it has been so faithful to Christ, so faithful to His Cross. You have to subdue the most intractable, difficult, and slow thing in the world—man's self-will. You cannot expect rapid successes if you truly preach the Cross whereon Christ died, and which He surmounted not simply by leaving it behind but by rising again, and converting the very Cross into a power and glory.

Christ arouses antagonism in the human heart and heroism does not.

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Everybody welcomes a hero. The minority welcome Christ. We do resent His absolute command. We do resent parting completely with ourselves. We 22 do resent Christ.

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4. I go back to the word I spoke about the tribute of our shame. The demand is unsparing, remorseless. It is not simply that you are called on by God for a certain due, a change, an amendment, but for the tribute of yourself and your shame. When you heard about that heroism of my story, when you thrilled to it, I wonder did you pat yourself on the back a little for being capable of thrilling to things so high, so fine? When you thrilled to that story you felt a certain satisfaction with yourself because there was as much of the God in you as allowed you to be capable of thrilling to such heroisms. You felt, If I am capable of thrilling to such things, I cannot be such a bad sort. But when you felt the meaning of Christ's death for you, did you ever pat yourself on the back? The nearer the Cross came to you, the deeper it entered into you, were you the more disposed to admire yourself? There is no harm in your feeling pleased with yourself because you were able to thrill to these human heroisms; but if the impression Christ makes upon you is to leave you more satisfied with yourself, more proud of yourself for being able to respond, He has to get a great deal nearer to you yet. You 23 need to be—I will use a Scottish phrase which old ministers used to apply to a young minister when he had preached a “thoughtful and interesting discourse”—you need to be well shaken over the mouth of the pit. The great deep classic cases of Christian experience bear testimony to that. Christ and His Cross come nearer and nearer, and we do not realise what we owe Him until we realise that He has plucked us from the fearful pit, and the miry clay, and set us upon a rock of God's own founding. The meaning of Christ's death rouses our shame, self-contempt, and repentance. And we resent being made to feel ashamed of ourselves, we resent being made to repent. A great many people are afraid to come too near to anything that does that for them. That is a frequent reason for not going to church.

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5. Again, continuing. You would have gone a long way to see this Belgian man. You would have gazed upon him with something of reverence, certainly

with admiration. You would have regarded him as one received back from the dead. You think, If all men were like that, the world would be heaven. Well, there are a great many more like that than we think, who daily imperil 24 their life for their duty. But supposing every man and woman in the world were up to that pitch, and supposing you added them all together and took the total value of their moral heroism (if moral quantities were capable of being summed like that), would you then have the equivalent of the deed and death of Christ? No, indeed! If you took all the world, and made heroes of them all, and kept them heroic all their lives, instead of only in one act, still you would not get the value, the equivalent, of Christ's sacrifice. It is not the sum of all heroisms. It would be more true to say it is the source of all heroisms, the foundation of them all. It is the underground something that makes heroisms, not something that heroisms make up. When Christ did what He did, it was not human nature doing it, it was God doing it. That is the great, absolutely unique and glorious thing. It is God in Christ reconciling. It was not human nature offering its very best to God. It was God offering His very best to man. That is the grand difference between the Church and civilisation, even when civilisation is religious. We must attend more to those great issues between our faith and our world. Our religion 25 has been too much a thing done in a corner. We must adjust our religion to the great currents and movements of the world's history. And the great issue of the hour is the issue between the Church and civilisation. Their essential difference is this. Civilisation at its best represents the most man can do with the world and with human nature; but the Church, centred upon Christ, His Cross, and His work, represents the best that God can do upon them. The sacrifice of the Cross was not man in Christ pleasing God; it was God in Christ reconciling man, and in a certain sense, reconciling Himself. My point at this moment is that the Cross of Christ was Christ reconciling 26 man. It was not heroic man dying for a beloved and honoured God; it was God in some form dying for man. God dying for man. I am not afraid of that phrase; I cannot do without it. God dying for man; and for such men—hostile, malignantly hostile men. That is a puzzling phrase where we read in a gospel: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." There is more love in the phrase of the epistle, that a man should lay down his life for his bitter enemies. It is not so heroic, so very divine, to die for our friends. Kindness between the nice people is not so very 26 divine—fine and precious as it is. To die for enemies that is the divine thing. Christ's was grace that died for such—for malignant enemies. There is more

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in God than love. There is all that we mean by His holy grace. Truly, "God is love." Yes, but the kind of love which you must interpret by the whole of the New Testament. When John said that, did he mean that God was simply the consummation of human affection? He knew that he was dealing with a holy, gracious God, a God who loved His enemies and redeemed them. Read with extreme care 1 John iv. 10.

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6. Let me gather up the points of difference which I have been indicating.

First, that Belgian hero did not act from love so much as from duty. Secondly, he died only in one act, not in his whole life, dying daily. There have been men capable of acts of sacrifice like this hero; loose-living men who, after a heroism, were quite capable of returning to their looseness of life—heroes of the Bret Harte type. There have been many valiant, fearless things done on the battlefield by men who in the face of bullets never flinched, never turned a hair; and when they came home they could not stand against a breath of ridicule, they could not stand against a little temptation, and were soon wallowing in the mire. One act of sacrifice is not the same thing as a life gathered into one consummate sacrifice, whose value is that it has the whole personality put into it for ever. 27

Third, this man could not take the full measure of all that he was doing, and Christ could. Christ did not go to His death with His eyes shut. He died because He willed to die, having counted the cost with the greatest, deepest moral vision in the world.

Fourthly, the hero in the story had nothing to do with the moral condition of those whom he saved. The scoundrel and the saint in that train were both alike to him.

Again, he had no quarrel with those whom he saved. He had nothing to complain of. He had nothing from them to try his heroism. They were not his bitter enemies. His valour was not the heroism of forgiveness, where lies the wondrous majesty of God. His act was not an act of grace, which is the grand glory of the love of Christ. Christ died for people who not only did not know Him, but who hated and despised Him. He died, not for a trainful of people, but for the whole organic world of people. It was an infinite death, that of His, in its range and in its power. It was death for enemies more bitter than anything that man can feel against man, for such haters as only holiness can produce. Here is the singular thing: the greater the favour that 28

CHAPTER 1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S SACRIFICE AND MAN'S

is done to us, the more fiercely we resent it if it does not break us down and make us grateful. The greater the favour, if we do not respond in its own spirit, so much the more resentful and antagonistic it makes us. I have already said that we speak too often as though the effect of Christ's death upon human nature must be gratitude as soon as it is understood. It is not always gratitude. Unless it is received in the Holy Ghost, the effect may just be the other way. It is judgment. It is a death unto death.

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I conclude by saying what I have often said, and what often needs saying, that it is not possible to hear the gospel and to go away just as you came. I wish that were more realised. We should not have so many sermon-hunters. If people felt that every time they heard the gospel they were either better or worse for it, they would be more careful about hearing. They would not go so often, possibly; better they should not, perhaps. I am not speaking about 29 hearing of sermons. That is neither here nor there. A man may hear sermons and be neither the better nor the worse. But a man cannot hear the gospel without being either better or worse, whether he knows it or not. When you come to face the last issues, it is either unto salvation or unto condemnation. The great central, decisive thing, the last judgment of the world, is the Cross of Christ. The reason why so many sermons are found uninteresting is not always due to the dullness of the preacher. God knows how often that is the case, but it is not always. It is because the sermons so often turn, or ought to turn, upon the miracle of the grace of God, which is so great a miracle that it is strange, remote, and alien to our natural ways of thinking and feeling. It seems foreign to us. It is like reading a guide-book if you have never been in the country. I take down my Baedeker in the winter and read it with the greatest delight, because I know the country. If I had not been there I should find it the dreariest reading. Why do not people read the Bible more? Because they have not been in that country. There is no experience for it to stir and develop. The Cross of Christ, the infinite wonder of it—we have got to learn that. We have got to learn the deep meaning of that by having 30 been there, by the evangelical experience whose lack is the cause of all the religious vagrancy of the hour. We have got to learn that it was not simply magnificent heroism, but that it was God in Christ reconciling the world. It was God that did that work in Christ. And Christ was the living God working upon man, and working out the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 2

THE GREAT SACRIFICIAL WORK IS TO RECONCILE

Corinthians v.14–vi.2; Romans v.1–11; Colossians i.10–29; Ephesians ii.16.

THE great need of the religious world to-day is a return to the Bible. That is necessary for two reasons, negative and positive. Negatively, because the most serious feature of the hour in the life of the Church is the neglect of the Bible for personal use and study by religious people. Positively, because we have to-day enormous advantages in connection with that return to the Bible. Modern scholarship has made of the Bible a new Book. It has in a certain sense rediscovered it. You might say that the soul of the Reformation was the rediscovery of the Bible; and in a wider sense that is true to-day also. We have, through the labours of more than a century of the finest scholarship in all the world, come to understand the Bible, in its original sense, as it 34 was never understood before. These instructed scribes draw forth from their treasury things as new as old. It is the old Book, and it is a new Book. It remains the old Book, and the precious Book, because of its power of unceasing self-renovation. The spirit that lives within the Bible is a spirit of constant self-preservation. One way of describing the Reformation is to say that, since the early Gnostic centuries, it was the greatest effort that ever took place in the Church for the self-preservation of Christianity. Remember, the Church was not reformed from the outside, but from the inside. It was the Church reforming the Church. It was the Church's faith that arose, under the Holy Spirit, and reformed the Church. So it is with the Bible. Whatever renovation we find in connection with the Bible—I do not here

mean renovation of ourselves, but renovation of our way of understanding the Book—arises out of the Bible itself. This remains true to-day, as it was true in the Reformation time, although it is now true in a somewhat different application. The Bible is still the best commentary upon itself. I have always done much in my ministry in the way of expounding the Bible, and I would say to the younger ministers particularly who are here, Do not be afraid of 35 that manner of preaching. I have known young ministers who were over-scrupulous. I have known them say, “If I take a long text people will think it is because I am lazy and do not want the labour of getting a sermon out of a small one.” Never mind such foolish people. Do not be afraid of long texts, long passages. Preach less from verses and more from paragraphs. If I had my time over again I would do a great deal more in that way than I have done. Read but one lesson, and read it with elucidatory comments. Of course some people can do that better than others. There is always the danger that if a person try it who has no sort of knack in that direction, the people will feel they have been let in for two sermons instead of one; and, excellent as these might be, people do not like to feel they have been got to church upon false pretences. It might even give an excuse to certain people for omitting one of the services altogether, on the plea they had put in the requisite amount of attention at one service. I would also admit that if you do this it will not reduce your labour. It will really add what might amount to another sermon to your weekly work. It is no use doing it if you do it on the spur of the moment. If you just say things that occur to your mind while 36 you are reading, you may say some banal, or some nonsensical and fantastic things. It means careful preparation. The lesson should be prepared as truly as the prayer should be prepared, and as the sermon should be prepared. You have to work your way through the chapter with the aid of the best commentary that you can get; and you have to exercise continual judgment in doing so lest you be dragged away into little matters of detail instead of keeping to the larger lines of thought in the passage in hand. Then, if you do as I say, there is this other advantage, that you can take a particular verse out of the long passage for your sermon; and thus you come to the sermon with an audience which you yourself have prepared to listen to you. You have created your own atmosphere, and you have done it on a Bible basis.

Now I will confess against myself that sometimes, as I preach about here and there, and have done as I have been recommending you to do, people have come to me afterwards and said, as nicely as they could, that the sermon was all very well, but in respect of the reading of the Scripture, they never

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heard it after that fashion; they had never realised how vivid Scripture could become. That simply results from paying attention to the chapter with the 37 best help. You will find, I am sure, that your congregation will welcome it.

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Supposing, then, we return to the Bible. Supposing that the Church did—as I think it must do if it is not going to collapse; certainly the Free Churches must—supposing we return to the Bible, there are three ways of reading the Bible. The first way asks, What did the Bible say? The second way asks, What can I make the Bible say? The third way asks, What does God say in the Bible?

§

The first way is, with the aid of these magnificent scholars, to discover the true historic sense of the Bible. There is no more signal illustration of success here than in the case of the Prophets. During the time when theology dominated everything and was considered to be the Church's one grand concern, about one hundred years after the Reformation, when its great prophets had passed away, and the Church had fallen into different hands, the whole of the Old Testament—the Prophets amongst the rest—was read for proof passages of theological doctrines. Now for books like the Prophets 38 that is absolutely fatal—fatal to the books and to the Church; and fatal in the long run to Christian truth. There is no greater service that has been done to the Bible than what has been done by the scholars I speak of, in making the Prophets live again, putting them in their true historical setting and position. Dr. George Adam Smith, for example, has done inestimable service in this way. And what has been done for the Prophets has also been done for the New Testament. Immense steps onward have been taken; and we are coming to know with much exactness what the writer actually had in his mind at the moment of writing, and what he was understood to have had in his mind by those to whom he first wrote. In this way we get rid, for example, of the idea that Paul was thinking about us who live two thousand years after him. He was not thinking of us at all. He did not expect the world to last a century. It is quite another question what the Holy Spirit was thinking about. Paul was thinking in a natural way about his age and his Churches, about their actual situation and needs. That is another illustration

of the principle that if you want to work for immortality you must work in the most relevant and faithful way amid the circumstances round about you. 39 The present duty is the path to immortality. And so also I might illustrate in respect to the Gospels.

§

The second way of reading the Bible is reading it unto edification. That is to say, we read a passage, and we allow ourselves to receive any suggestion that may come to us from it, and we do not stop to ask whether that was in the writer's mind, or whether it was in the mind of the people to whom he wrote. That is immaterial. We allow the Spirit of God to suggest to us whatever lessons or ideas He thinks fit out of the words that are under our eyes. We read the Bible not for correct or historic knowledge, but for religious and spiritual purposes, for our own private and personal needs. That is, of course, a perfectly legitimate thing—indeed, it is quite necessary. It is the way of reading the Bible which the large mass of the Church must always practise. But it has its dangers. You need the other ways to correct it. All the three must cooperate for the true use and understanding of the Bible by the Church at large. But I am speaking now about its use by individuals, and the danger I mean is that the suggestiveness may sometimes become 40 fantastic. Some preachers fail at times in that way. They get to taking what are called fancy texts, texts which impress the audience much more with the ingenuity of the preacher than with his inspiration. For instance, a preacher in the North, now dead, was preaching against the Higher Criticism and its slicing up of the Bible, and he took his text from Nehemiah, "He cut it with a penknife"! That is all very well, perhaps, for a motto, but for a text it is rather a liberty. It is not fair to the Bible to indulge in much of that at least. If I remember rightly, Dr. Parker had a great gift in this way, and more than sometimes it ran away with him. It is a temptation of every witty man, and every ingenious-minded man. But there is a peril in it, the abuse of a right principle. We are bound, of course, to vindicate for ourselves and for others the right to use the Bible in the suggestive way, if we are not to make a present of it to the scholars. And that would be just as bad as making a present of it to a race of priests. But when we read too much in that way it is apt to become a minister to our spiritual egotism, or, what is equally bad, our fanciful subjectivity.

Now the grand value of the Bible is just the other thing—its objectivity. 41

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The first thing is not how I feel, but it is, How does God feel, and what has God said or done for my soul? When we get to real close quarters with that our feeling and response will look after itself. Do not tell people how they ought to feel towards Christ. That is useless. It is just what they ought that they cannot do. Preach a Christ that will make them feel as they ought. That is objective preaching. The tendency and fashion of the present moment is all in the direction of subjectivity. People welcome sermons of a more or less psychological kind, which go into the analysis of the soul or of society. They will listen gladly to sermons on character-building, for instance; and in the result they will get to think of nothing else but their own character. They will be the builders of their own character; which is a fatal thing. Learn to commit your soul and the building of it to One who can keep it and build it as you never can. Attend then to Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom, and the Cause, and He will look after your soul. A consequence of this passion for subjective and psychological analysis, for sentimental experience and problem-preaching, is that when a preacher begins preaching a real, objective, New Testament gospel he has raised against him what is now the 42 most fatal accusation—even within the Christian Church it has come to be very fatal—he is accused of being a theologian. That is a very fatal charge to make now against any preacher. It ought to be actionable in the way of libel. We have come to this—that if you penetrate into the interior of the New Testament you will be accused of being a theologian; and then it is all over with your welcome. But that state of things has to be turned upside down, else the Church dries into the sand. There is no message in it.

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The third way of reading the Bible is reading it to discover the purpose and thought of God, whether it immediately edify us or whether it do not. If we did actually become aware of the will and thought of God it would edify us as nothing else could. No inner process, no discipline to which we might subject ourselves, no way of cultivating subjective holiness would do so much for us as if we could lose ourselves, and in some godly sort forget ourselves, because we are so preoccupied with the mind of Christ. If you want psychological analysis, analyse the will, work, and purpose of Christ our Lord. I read a fine sentence the other day which puts in a condensed 43 form what I have often preached about as the symptom of the present age: “Instead of placing themselves at the service of God most people want a

God who is at their service.” These two tendencies represent in the end two different religions. The man who is exploiting God for the purposes of his own soul or for the race, has in the long run a different religion from the man who is putting his own soul and race absolutely at the disposal of the will of God in Jesus Christ.

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All this is by way of preface to an attempt to approach the New Testament and endeavour to find what is really the will of God concerning Christ and what Christ did. Doctrine and life are really two sides of one Christianity; and they are equally indispensable, because Christianity is living truth. It is not merely truth; it is not simply life. It is living truth. The modern man says that doctrine which does not pass into life is dead; and then the mistake he makes is that he wants to turn it into life directly, and to politicise it, perhaps; whereas it works indirectly. The experience of many centuries, on the other hand, says that Christian life which does not grow out of Christian doctrine becomes a failure. If not in individuals, it does in the Church. You cannot keep Christian piety alive except upon Christian truth. You can never get a Catholic Church except by Catholic truth. I think perhaps we all here agree about that. It is of immense importance that we do not think entirely about our individual souls, and that we think more about the Church, the divine will, the divine Word, and the divine Kingdom in the world. It is of supreme importance that we should know what the Christian doctrine is on the great matters. 44

Now in connection with the work of Christ the great expositor in the Bible is St. Paul. And Paul has a word of his own to describe Christ’s work—the word “reconciliation.” But he thinks of reconciliation not as a doctrine but as an act of God—because he was not a theologian but an experience preacher. To view it so produces an immense change in your whole way of thinking. It secures for you all that is worth having in theology, and it delivers you from the danger of obsession by theology in a one-sided way. Remember, then, that the truth we are dealing with is precious not as a mere truth but as the means of expressing the eternal act of God. The most important thing in all the world, in the Bible or out of it, is something that God has done—for ever finally done. And it is this reconciliation; which is only secondarily a doctrine; it is only secondarily even a manner of life. Primarily it is an act of God. That is to say, it is a salvation before it is a religion. For Christianity 45

as a religion stands upon salvation. Religion which does not grow out of salvation is not Christian religion; it may be spiritual, poetic, mystic; but the essence of Christianity is not just to be spiritual; it is to answer God's manner of spirituality, which you find in Jesus Christ and in Him crucified. Reconciliation is salvation before it is religion. And it is religion before it is theology. All our theology in this matter rests upon the certain experience of the fact of God's salvation. It is salvation upon divine principles. It is salvation by a holy God. It is bound of course, to be theological in its very nature. Its statement is a theology. The moment you begin to talk about the holiness of God you are theologians. And you cannot talk about Christ and His death in any thorough way without talking about the holiness of God. 46

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Christ and Him crucified, that is the historic fact. But what do I mean when I say Christ and Him crucified? Does it mean that a certain personality lived who was recognised in history as Jesus Christ, and that He came by His end by crucifixion? That in itself is worthless for religious purposes. It is useful enough if you are writing history; but for religion historical fact must have interpretation, and the whole of Christianity depends upon the interpretation that is put upon such facts. You will find people sometimes who say, "Let us have the simple historic facts, the Cross and Christ." That is not Christianity. Christianity is a certain interpretation of those facts. How and why did the New Testament come into being? Was it simply to convince posterity that those facts had taken place? Was it simply to convince the world that Christ had risen from the dead? If that were the grand object of the New Testament we should have a very different Bible in our hands, one addressed to the world and not to the Church, to critical science and not to faith; and there would not be so much argument amongst scholars as there is. The Bible did not come into being in order to provide future historians with a valuable document. It came for the purposes of interpretation. Here 47 is a sentence I came across once: "The fact without the word is dumb; the word without the fact is empty." It is useful to turn it over and over in your mind.

Paul was almost the creator and the great representative of that interpretation. It was continued on his lines by Augustine, Anselm, Luther, and many another. But what is it that we hear about so much to-day? We hear a great deal about an undogmatic Christianity. And there is a certain

plausibility in it. If you have no theological training, no training in the understanding of the Scripture in a serious way, that is, if you do not know your business as ministers of the Word, it seems natural that undogmatic Christianity should be just the thing you want. Leave the dogma of it, you will say, to those who devote their lives to dogma—just as though theologians were irrepressible people who take up theology as a hobby and become the bores of the Church! It was not a hobby to the apostles. Why, there are actually people of a similar stamp who look upon missions as a hobby of the Church, instead of their belonging to the very being and fidelity of the Church. So some people think theology is a hobby, and that theologians are persons with 48 an uncomfortable preponderance of intellect, who are trying to destroy the privileges secured by our national lack of education and to sacrifice Christianity to mind. People say we do not want so much intellect in preaching; we want sympathy and unction. Now, I am always looking afield, and looking forward, and thinking about the prospects of the Church in the great world. And unction dissociated from Christian truth and Christian intelligence has at last the sentence of the Church's death within itself. You may cherish an undogmatic Christianity with a sort of magnetic casing, a purely human, mystical, subjective kind of Christ for yourself or an audience, but you could not continue to preach that in a Church for the ages. The Church could not live on that and do its preaching in such a world. You could not spread a gospel like that. Subjective religion is valuable in its place, but its place is limited. The only Cross you can preach to the whole world is a theological one. It is not the fact of the Cross, it is the interpretation of the Cross, the prime theology of the Cross, what God meant by the Cross, that is everything. That is what the New Testament came to give. That is the only kind of Cross that can make or keep a Church. 49

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You will say, perhaps, "Cannot I go out and preach my impressions of the Cross?" By all means. You will only discover the sooner that you cannot preach a Cross to any purpose if you preach it only as an experience. If you only preach it so you would not be an apostle; and you could not do the work of an apostle for the Church. The apostles were particular about this, and one expressed it quite pointedly: "We preach not ourselves [nor our experiences] but Christ crucified." "We do not preach religion," said Paul, "but God's revelation. We do not preach the impression the Cross

made upon us, but the message that God by His Spirit sent through a Christ we experience.” And so with ourselves. We do not preach our impressions, or even our experience. These make but the vehicle, as it were. What we preach is something much more solid, more objective, with more stay in it; something that can suffice when our experience has ebbed until it seems to be as low as Christ’s was in the great desertion and victory on the Cross. We want something that will stand by us when we cannot feel any more; we want a Cross we can cling to, not simply a subjective Cross. That is, to put the thing in another way, what we want to-day is an insight into the Cross. You 50 see I am making a distinction between impression and insight. It is a useful part of the Church’s work, for instance, that it should act by means of revival services, where perhaps the dominant element may be temporary impression. But unless that is taken up and turned to account by something more, we all know how evanescent a thing it is apt to be. We need, not simply to be impressed by Christ, but to see into Christ and into His Cross. We need to deepen the impression until it become new life by seeing into Christ. There are certain circumstances in which we may be entitled to declare that we do not want so many people who glibly say they love Jesus; we want more people who can really see into Christ. We do, of course, want more people who love Jesus; but we want a multitude of more people who are not satisfied with that, but whose love fills them with holy curiosity and compels them habitually to cultivate in the Spirit the power of seeing into Christ and into His Cross. More than impression, do we need a spirit of divination. Insight is what we want for power—less of mere interest and more of real insight. There are some people who talk as though, when we speak of the Cross and the meaning of the Cross, we were spinning something out of the Cross. Paul 51 was not spinning anything out of the Cross. He was gazing into the Cross, seeing what was really there with eyes that had been unsealed and purged by the Holy Ghost.

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The doctrine of Christ’s reconciliation, or His Atonement, is not a piece of medieval dogma like transubstantiation, not a piece of ecclesiastical dogma or Aristotelian subtlety which it might be the Bible’s business to destroy. If you look at the Gospels you will see that from the Transfiguration onward this matter of the Cross is the great centre of concern; it is where the centre of gravity lies. I met a man the other day who had come under some poor and

mischievous pulpit influence, and he said, "It is time we got rid of hearing so much about the Cross of Christ; there should be preached to the world a humanitarian Christ, the kind of Christ that occupies the Gospels." There was nothing for it but to tell that man he was the victim of smatterers, and that he must go back to his Gospels and read and study for a year or two. It is the flimsiest religiosity, and the most superficial reading of the Gospel, that could talk like that. What does it mean that an enormous proportion of the Gospel story is occupied with the passion of Christ? The centre of 52 gravity, even in the Gospels, falls upon the Cross of Christ and what was done there, and not simply upon a humanitarian Christ. You cannot set the Gospels against Paul. Why, the first three Gospels were much later than Paul's Epistles. They were written for Churches that were made by the apostolic preaching. But how, then, do the first three Gospels *seem* so different from the Epistles? Of course, there is a superficial difference. Christ was a very living and real character for the people of His own time, and His grand business was to rouse his audiences' faith in His Person and in His mission. But in His Person and in His mission the Cross lay latent all the time. It emerged only in the fullness of time—that valuable phrase—just when the historic crisis, the organic situation, produced it. Jesus was not a professor of theology. He did not lecture the people. He did not come with a theology of the Cross. He did not come to force events to comply with that theology. He did not force His own people to work out a theological scheme. He did force an issue, but it was not to illustrate a theology. It was to establish the Kingdom of God, which could be established in no other wise than as He established it—upon the Cross. And He could only teach the 53 Cross when it had happened—which He did through the Evangelists with the space they gave it, and through the Apostles and the exposition they gave it.

To come back to this work of Christ described by Paul as reconciliation. On this interpretation of the work of Christ the whole Church rests. If you move faith from that centre you have driven *the* nail into the Church's coffin. The Church is then doomed to death, and it is only a matter of time when she shall expire. The Apostle, I say, described the work of Christ as above all things reconciliation. And Paul was the founder of the Church, historically speaking. I do not like to speak of Christ as the Founder of the Church. It seems remote, detached, journalistic. It would be far more true to say that He is the foundation of the Church. "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." The founder of the Church, historically speaking,

was Paul. It was founded by and through him on this reconciling principle—nay, I go deeper than that, on this mighty *act* of God's reconciliation. For this great act the interpretation was given to Paul by the Holy Spirit. In this connection read that great word in 1 Corinthians ii.; that is the most valuable 54 word in the New Testament about the nature of apostolic inspiration.

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What, then, did Paul mean by this reconciliation which is the backbone of the Church? He meant the total result of Christ's life-work in permanently changing the relation between collective man and God. By reconciliation Paul meant the total result of Christ's life-work in the fundamental, permanent, final changing of the relation between man and God, altering it from a relation of hostility to one of confidence and peace. Remember, I am speaking as Paul spoke, about man, and not about individual men or groups of men.

There are two principal Greek words connected with the idea of reconciliation, one of them being always translated by it, the other sometimes. They are *katallassein*, and *hilaskesthai*—reconciliation and atonement. Atonement is an Old Testament phrase, where the idea is that of the covering of sin from God's sight. But by whom? Who was that great benefactor of the human race that succeeded in covering up our sin from God's sight? Who was skilful enough to hoodwink the Almighty? Who covered the sin? The all-seeing God alone. There can therefore be no talk of hoodwinking. Atonement means the 55 covering of sin by something which God Himself had provided, and therefore the covering of sin by God Himself. It was of course not the blinding of Himself to it, but something very different. How could the Judge of all the earth make His judgment blind? It was the covering of sin by something which makes it lose the power of deranging the covenant relation between God and man and founds the new Humanity. That is the meaning of it.

If you think I am talking theology, you must blame the New Testament. I am simply expounding to you the New Testament. Of course, you need not take it unless you please. It is quite open to you to throw the New Testament overboard (so long as you are frank about it), and start what you may loosely call Christianity on other floating lines. But if you take the New Testament you are bound to try to understand the New Testament. If you understand the New Testament you are bound to recognise that this is what the New Testament says. It is a subsequent question whether the New Testament is

right in saying so. Let us first find out what the Bible really says, and then discuss whether the Bible is right or wrong. 56

The idea of atonement is the covering of sin by something which God provided, and by the use of which sin loses its accusing power, and its power to derange that grand covenant and relationship between man and God which founds the New Humanity. The word *katallassein* (reconcile) is peculiar to Paul. He uses both words; but the other word, "atonement," you also find in other New Testament writings. Reconciliation is Paul's great characteristic word and thought. The great passages are those I have mentioned at the head of this lecture. I cannot take time to expound them here. That would mean a long course. Read those passages carefully and check me in anything I say—particularly, for instance, 2 Corinthians v. 14–vi. 2. Out of it we gather this whole result. First, Christ's work is something described as reconciliation. And second, reconciliation rests upon atonement as its ground. Do not stop at "God was in Christ reconciling the world." You can easily water that down. You may begin the process by saying that God was in Christ just in the same way in which He was in the old prophets. That is the first dilution. Then you go on with the homœopathic treatment, and you say, "Oh yes, all He did by Christ was to affect the world, and impress it by showing it how much He loved it." Now, would that reconcile anybody 57 really in need of it? When your child has flown into a violent temper with you, and still worse, a sulky temper, and glooms for a whole day, is it any use your sending to that child and saying, "Really, this cannot go on. Come back. I love you very much. Say you are sorry." Not a bit of use. For God simply to have told or shown the evil world how much He loved it would have been a most ineffectual thing. Something had to be *done*—judging or saving. Revelation alone is inadequate. Reconciliation must rest on atonement. For, as I say, you must not stop at "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," but go on "not reckoning unto them their trespasses." "He made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin." That involves atonement. You cannot blot out that phrase. And the third thing involved in the idea is that this reconciliation, this atonement, means change of relation between God and man—man, mind you, not two or three men, not several groups of men, but man, the human race as one whole. And it is a change of relation from alienation to communion—not simply to our peace and confidence, but to reciprocal communion. The grand end of reconciliation is communion. I am pressing that hard. I am pressing it hard here by saying that it is not enough 58 that we should worship God. It is not enough that we should worship a

personal God. It is not enough that we should worship and pay our homage to a loving God. That does not satisfy the love of God. Nothing short of living, loving, holy, habitual communion between His holy soul and ours can realise at last the end which God achieved in Jesus Christ.

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In this connection let me offer you two cautions. First, take care that the direct fact of reconciliation is not hidden up by the indispensable means—namely, atonement. There have been ages in the Church when the attention has been so exclusively centred upon atonement that reconciliation was lost sight of. You found theologians flying at each other's throats in the interest of particular theories of atonement. That is to say, atonement had obscured reconciliation. In the same way, after the Reformation period, they dwelt upon justification until they lost sight of sanctification altogether. Then the great pietistic movement had to arise in order to redress the balance. Take care that the end, reconciliation, is not hidden up by the means, atonement. 59 Justification, sanctification, reconciliation and atonement are all equally inseparable from the one central and compendious work of Christ. Various ages need various aspects of it turned outward. Let us give them all their true value and perspective. If we do not we shall make that fatal severance which orthodoxy has so often made between doctrine and life.

The second caution is this. Beware of reading atonement out of reconciliation altogether. Beware of cultivating a reconciliation which is not based upon justification. The apostle's phrases are often treated like that. They are emptied of the specific Christian meaning. There are a great many Christian people, spiritual people of a sort, to-day, who are perpetrating that injustice upon the New Testament. They are taking mighty old words and giving them only a subjective, arbitrary meaning, emptying out of them the essential, objective, positive content. They are preoccupied with what takes place within their own experience, or imagination, or thought; and they are oblivious of that which is declared to have taken place within the experience of God and of Christ. They are oblivious and negligent of the essential things 60 that Christ did, and God in Christ. That is not fair treatment of New Testament terms—to empty them of positive Christian meaning and water them down to make something that might suit a philosophic or mystic or subjective or individualist spirituality. There is a whole system of philosophy that has attempted this dilution at the present day. It is associated with a name

that has now become very well known, the name of the greatest philosopher the world ever saw, Hegel. I am not now going to expound Hegelianism. But I have to allude to one aspect of it. If you are paying any attention to what is going on around you in the thinking world, you are bound to come face to face with some phase of it or other. But I see my time is at an end for to-day.

§

To-morrow I begin where I now leave off and shall say something about this version of St. Paul's idea of reconciliation, which is so attractive philosophically. I remember the appeal it had for me when I came into contact with it first. I did feel that it seemed to give a largeness to certain New Testament terms, which I finally found was a largeness of latitude only. If it 61 did seem to give breadth it did not give depth. And I close here by reminding you of this—that while Christ and Christianity did come to make us broad men, it did not come to do that in the first instance. It came to make us deep men. The living interest of Christ and of the Holy Spirit is not breadth, but it is depth. Christ said little that was wide compared with what He said piercing and searching. I illustrate by referring you to an interest that is very prominent amongst—you the interest of missions. How did modern missions arise? I mean the last hundred years of them. Modern Protestant missions are only one hundred years old. Where did they begin? Who began them? They began at the close of the eighteenth century, the century whose close was dominated by philosophers, by scientists, by a reasonable, moderate interpretation of religion, by broad humanitarian religion. Of course, you might expect it was amongst those broad people that missions arose. We know better. We know that the Christian movement which has spread around the world did not arise out of the liberal thinkers, the humanitarian philosophers of the day, who were its worst enemies, but with a few men Carey, Marshman, Ward, and the like—whose Calvinistic theology we should 62 now consider very narrow. But they did have the root of the universal matter in them. A gospel deep enough has all the breadth of the world in its heart. If we are only deep enough the breadth will take care of itself. I would ten times rather have one man who was burning deep, even though he wanted to burn me for my modern theology, than I would have a broad, hospitable, and thin theologian who was willing to take me in and a nondescript crowd of others in a sheet let down from heaven, but who had no depth, no fire,

*CHAPTER 2. THE GREAT SACRIFICIAL WORK IS TO RECONCILE*³³

no skill to search, and no power to break. For the deep Christianity is that which not only searches us, but breaks us. And a Christianity which would exclude none has no power to include the world.

Chapter 3

RECONCILIATION: PHILOSOPHIC AND CHRISTIAN