

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND TRANSITION

IN the course of our survey we have maintained the position that Protestantism truly laid the foundations of the theory of the Rule of Faith. As regards the ultimate source of Christian knowledge it was justified in holding, as against Rationalism, that it is derived from a self-disclosure of God which differed in respect of the manner of communication, and also of its richer and more efficacious content, from the general revelation made through nature and history. As regards the repository of the Christian revelation it rightly held, as against Romanism, that the one trustworthy channel by which it has been transmitted to us is the collection of the sacred books of canonical Scripture. As regards the means of interpreting the content of the Christian revelation, it properly repudiated the idea that the truth which it contains is to be measured and regulated by an ecclesiastical or rationalistic standard, and properly affirmed that it falls to be interpreted by believing thought working upon the records in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand it cannot be said that the rival theories which have emerged in the history of the Church have been wholly misleading. They have their relative justification in that each emphasises an element of truth for which some place has to be found in a complete theory of the source

and norm of Christian knowledge. It has also become apparent in the course of the discussion that Protestant theology can no longer profess that it fully enunciates its own theory when it declares that the Bible is the supreme rule of faith and practice, and that it requires in addition to formulate and work with a definition of the essential content of revelation which it extracts from the Bible.

I

There is none of the classic theories which, erroneous as it may be in its entirety, does not emphasise a truth which has been overlooked or neglected in some of the developments of Protestantism. The fundamental antithesis to the Christian mode of thought is exhibited by Rationalism; but there is a sense in which all theology must ultimately be rational—since it must rest on grounds which are capable of being stated and defended, and further, the faith on which so much responsibility must be laid in interpreting and appropriating the Christian revelation is none other than reason suffused by higher influences, and operating under peculiar conditions. It has also been contended—in opposition to a timorous Lutheranism which, though magnifying faith, has not faith enough to see God revealed in His universe—that human reflection on the works of creation and providence has supplied truths that deserve and require to be combined with the specially authenticated knowledge of the Christian system into a more comprehensive whole.

The elaborated Roman Catholic theory affirms historical positions which are untenable; and in particular it makes on behalf of the Roman Church, and

of its official head, a claim of infallible authority which is inherently improbable, and which has no substantial support in Scripture or in primitive usage. At the same time Rome teaches more truth on this subject than is involved in its emphatic affirmation of the reality of revelation, and in its reverent appreciation—manifestly increasing in the modern environment—of the written word as a channel of revelation. On Protestant principles we are bound to attach very great importance to the general and sustained testimony of the Christian society. For if Christian truth be recognised and apprehended under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is evident that there is no evidence so trustworthy concerning the actual testimony of the Holy Spirit as the witness borne by the Christian Church throughout its history. To a representative organ of truly catholic piety and belief the first Protestants, to judge from some of their utterances, would have been willing to bow; and a large body of modern Protestants would be willing to use the test of a genuine catholicity as a note of the Christian truth which has the corroboration of the Spirit of truth.

The School of the Spirit has contributed nothing which substantiates the claim that material additions have been made, by way of private revelations, to the knowledge of God and of divine things which came through the Christian revelation. But at one point it had a firmer grasp on Protestant principle than the second and the immediately succeeding generations of Protestantism. The tendency of the later Protestantism was to empty of its meaning the doctrine of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and to construe the Christian dispensation as a deistic economy which God had initiated by the gift of a sacred volume, but which thereafter He had left to itself and to the ministry of the Book.

It was therefore no small service which was rendered in protesting that the same Spirit that worked in the Apostles works ever in the Church, not only as the Lord and Giver of life, but as the light of all minds that know the truth, and as their aid in the administration of the principles of the Gospel. For this school, erroneously as it expressed its observation, had a more correct apprehension than orthodox Protestantism of the genius of the Christian religion. It realised that Christianity is a system of doctrinal principles and ethical maxims rather than a stereotyped body of dogmatic and moral theology—that the close of the Christian revelation accordingly was the beginning of a prolonged process of arduous thinking; and the legitimacy of the task which it professed to deal with by supplementary revelation must be recognised in the form that theology is a progressive science, and especially that the elaboration of the Christian Ethic is as yet barely a half-finished task.

The School of Feeling was doomed to futility in its attempt to derive theology exclusively from a subjective source. Feeling, when it seeks to utter itself, speaks by a stammering tongue; and even when the richer and more definite datum of Christian experience is fastened on, there is room for wide difference of opinion as to its precise content and significance. What Schleiermacher was impressed by in Christian experience was in truth an important fact—it was the same fact which impressed Calvin when he studied the content of the believing mind and heart, and was aware of a joyful feeling of assurance that a divine work of reconciliation and regeneration had been wrought, and that it had been wrought by the instrument of the Word of God. The difference was that

while Calvin rightly interpreted the feeling as a finger-post pointing to the mine of revealed truth, the subjective school in its typical representatives has looked upon it as being itself the spiritual mine. It would, however, be unjust to see in the principle of Schleiermacher nothing more than a recognition and a misuse of the fact of religious feeling. His method was an achievement which has led to an enrichment of theology through the more thorough investigation of the content of religious experience. In addition, it has sobered and strengthened theology by the conviction which it has diffused in far wider circles than those which own his leadership—viz. that theology must keep more closely to experience in the handling of doctrine. It has been realised that it is the function of experience to witness, not merely to the divine origin of Scripture, but to the matter of the Christian revelation, and that it is characteristic of the indubitably authentic matter of the Christian revelation that it is attested and verified in experience.¹ It has been argued in these pages that it is the duty of theology to utilise all available knowledge of God and of divine things, from whatever source it may be derived; but this is not inconsistent with the position that whatever is adopted in the theological system as bearing the hall-mark of revealed truth is authenticated by the fact that in Christian experience it evokes an instinctive response of assent to, or is necessary to accomplish some important part of, the work of our religion. It may be credible,

¹ 'If religious truths be accepted merely on the authority of the Bible, they are not accepted by us as in themselves either really true or religious. To be apprehended and realised by us as properly religious truths we must have a living insight into their nature and significance, and a veritable spiritual experience of their influence on our hearts and lives.'—Flint, *Agnosticism*, 1903, p. 492.

as was also argued, that there are elements in the revelation whose only guarantee is that they are vouched for by Christ, while His authority is vouched for by all the forces which build up the Christian certitude. But it may at least be generally affirmed that the family likeness of the authentic elements of revelation consists in the fact that individually, as well as in their combination, they make a self-evidencing appeal to the mind which is saturated by Christian experience.

II

It has been stated, in the second place, that a statement of the Protestant position in regard to religious authority, if it is to be candid, thorough and useful, must embrace a definition of the essential content of revelation or of the Christian religion. Candour requires such an addition, because it appears as matter of historical fact that for Protestantism the actual norm of doctrine has never been the Scriptures in their entirety, but has ever been a scheme of saving truth extracted from Scripture. For Protestantism no less than for Roman Catholicism Scripture was a *norma normata*—the difference being that the latter avowedly derived the *norma normans* from ecclesiastical tradition, while the former employed a divinely guided tact to discover it in Scripture. It is evident that circumstances have so changed since the sixteenth century that, while in that day it was information to all whom it concerned to declare that the Bible is the supreme standard, a similar declaration to-day is rather of the nature of an evasion. In the older period it was possible to hope and believe that if the Bible was acknowledged as the Rule of Faith there would be substantial agreement on

the part of competent thinkers as to the contents of the system of the Gospel. This is no longer possible. It has been made clear in three centuries of Protestant history that a large number of Churches and schools can agree to profess the supreme authority of Scripture, while yet they can unfold its contents in doctrinal systems representing almost every shade of conflict and dissonance. It is therefore now a legitimate, and even a necessary demand, that every system of theology should give an account of the conception of Christianity which governs its dogmatic use of Scripture.

The task, accordingly, to which our inquiry has led up is the attempt to define the nature, and to set forth the theoretical content, of the Christian religion. In essaying this task we fix our attention on the fact that Christianity is primarily a religion, and it is from this point of view that we have to question the Scriptural records as to its essential nature. As a religion it is an engine which has been introduced into the world to do a particular spiritual work, and it throws light upon its genius to consider it in its context as one of the religions of the world—aiming at the same general end as the other faiths which have laid a spell upon the human mind, but also wholly transcending them by the grandeur of its promises, and the effectiveness of its provisions. The Christian religion, again, has been at work in the world for centuries, sometimes doing that work with impressive thoroughness, sometimes with very meagre and disappointing results, yet always in a form in which the fundamental type was recognisable, and in which something was accomplished that was not unworthy of the intention. As a fact the great divisions of organised Christendom, and also the schools of Christian theology

which have made any deep mark on the intellectual life of Christendom, have exhibited a much larger measure of agreement than has been recognised in theological polemics alike as to the aim, the presuppositions and the provisions of the Christian religion. In the following pages we shall have frequent opportunity to note that the main features of the Christian religion, as set forth in the original sources, are reproduced in the main divisions of Christendom to an extent that constitutes a real consensus of opinion and reveals a permanence of religious type. At the same time, in the historical development there have undeniably emerged modifications of Christianity which exhibit important and deep-seated differences; and it will be necessary to define the kind and degree of those differences, and to estimate their significance whether as a legitimate development of, or a morbid departure from, the type of Christianity which is attested in Scripture in its essential purpose and provisions, and which can also be divined as struggling for clear expression throughout the course of its chequered history.¹

In the second division of these lectures we shall endeavour to define the essential nature of the Christian religion with special reference to the intellectual content which it involves, and which is inseparable from its

¹ While for Protestant thinking the Scriptures are the classic source for the knowledge of the Christian religion, we may also hope to understand its nature better by studying it in history and at work. I am indebted to Professor Foster for a quotation from Troeltsch which admirably expresses this supplementary point of view:—

‘The essence of Christianity is a spiritual unity developing itself in the manifoldness of Christian history, a unity of which the majority is unconscious, and which is first to be apprehended by a historical abstraction. . . . Its discovery requires the employment of historical abstraction, the art of divination which takes in the whole at a glance, and at the same time the exactness and fulness of the methodically elaborated facts.’—*The Finality of the Christian Religion*, 1906, p. 301.

equipment for doing its special work in the world. Thereafter we shall try to fix the precise nature of the modifications of Christianity which emerged in the school of patristic Orthodoxy, in Roman Catholicism and in Protestantism, and to estimate their value in relation to the original and authentic type of Christianity. In the concluding chapters we shall apply the same criterion to certain leading types of modern theology.

possible, even in the name of piety, to renounce the hope of an unending existence.¹ The promise of continued existence is a specific boon of Christianity which is bound up with faith in Christ—a faith which involves the assurance that as He lives we must live also.² The final state of blessedness consists in the vision of God, but difficulties are felt in conceiving of the heavenly condition—whether it be agreed to think of it as gradually reached, or as immediately attained after death. Again, it is not easy to understand either how it can be a state of perfect bliss without work, or how it can be a state of perfect holiness if it involves difficult tasks and co-operation with others.³ Finally, some justification is claimed for the optimistic view that a restoration of all human souls will be the goal of the history of redemption.⁴

(d) It is to be added that Schleiermacher did not always conceive the blessings of the Christian religion to be exhausted in the communication to individuals of states of devout feeling. He emphasises, as we have seen, the teleological or ethical character of Christianity, which works for the realisation of the rich complex of graces, virtues and moral activities that are embraced in the idea of the Kingdom of God. He notes that, by universal consent, the piety which does

¹ 'When we consider on the one hand that we can have no stronger assurance of the soul's survival of death than we can have of its pre-existence, and on the other hand that every individual human life, whether regarded from the spiritual or the bodily side, belongs to a definite region in the province of humanity, and to a definite point of development, loses its significance outside these limits, and consequently is only formed for this period as a temporary phenomena, we may regard the collective human spirit as the source of particular souls, as the true living unity, to which eternity and immortality belong, and we may look on particular souls as merely its changing modes of activity.'—*Der Christliche Glaube*, 1^{te} Auf., ii. p. 623.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 474.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 499 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 505.

not take a hand in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God on earth is not Christian piety. 'The picture of the Kingdom of God, which is so important in Christianity, and which indeed is all-inclusive, is a general expression of the fact that in the Christian system all pain and all joy are only religious in so far as they are related to activity in the Kingdom of God, and that every religious impulse which starts from a passive condition issues in the consciousness of a transition to activity.'¹ In other words, a man who is only pious, and not also actively good, is not properly religious.

2. If Schleiermacher impairs the Protestant doctrine by resolving justification into regeneration, he claims that he is at least loyal to the cardinal principle of Protestant theology in his affirmation that the sole condition of entrance on the new life is faith in Christ. As we have seen, the religious problem resolves itself for him practically into this: How shall man, who is not naturally pious according to the devoutness of Christ, be quickened into a life akin to His divine life? And a natural answer to the question thus formulated is, that it results from the contact of Christ with the soul which meets Him in the receptive attitude of faith. He therefore rules out as alien to his system the Roman Catholic conception that good works have any place as a presupposition of justification.²

It is a convincing observation that we are made Christlike by the influence of Christ coming into

¹ *Ibid.*, i. p. 55. See also the section on the divine wisdom, ii. p. 519 ff.

² 'The position here taken is that a man is justified as soon as faith is engendered in him, while the interest of Roman Catholicism is to establish that he only attains justification through works.'—*Ibid.*, ii. p. 200.

contact with a soul that trusts Him, in the same way in which faith in a human friend is an essential condition of receiving a real impress from his character. With the identification of regeneration and justification, the question of the condition of acceptance with God is also settled; and there is no call to bring in good works as an extra condition. These are rather the fruit of the vital communion with Christ which is first established by faith. Faith in Christ is also the condition of the gradual realisation of Christlike character and blessedness which constitutes sanctification.

3. (a) The blessings which have been enumerated fall next to be considered in respect of their channel and source. We are thus led on to a doctrine of the Work and Person of Christ, and to the doctrine of God which lies in the background, and which ultimately conditions the whole interpretation of the mechanism of redemption. Mention is here made of the Work and Person of Christ in reversal of the usual order, because for Schleiermacher, as well as for later thinkers who have learned from him, the basal certainty is the redeeming work which Christ has accomplished, and the dignity of His person falls to be construed in the light of His benefits. The work of Christ, then, stated in the most concise terms, consists in this, that by Him are engendered the experiences of peace with God, and of deliverances from sin, which are characteristic of the new creature. Christ refashions those who come into contact with Him with the receptivity of the believing heart, and communicates to them an inner experience and a relation toward God which are akin to His own. 'The Redeemer,' we are told, 'assumes believers into participation with His own settled consciousness of God,

and this constitutes His redeeming work.'¹ And again, 'The Redeemer assumes believers into the communion of His tranquil blessedness, and this constitutes His reconciling work.'² The activity which He exerts is of a creative kind, and is due to the inspiring and life-giving influence of spirit upon spirit. The significance of His sufferings and death can be stated with the aid of the traditional terminology of the Atonement,³ but their essential efficacy lies in the fact that they intensify the influence which He brings to bear upon souls that were previously alienated from God and dominated by the sensuous nature. This creative and sustaining power which flows from Christ is manifested in the Christian society as the work of the Holy Ghost, which is defined as the collective Spirit of the new corporate life that was initiated by Christ.⁴ The Church, even more completely than the individual, has as its ideal and destination to become Christlike in its experience, through the creative power of the Spirit proceeding from Christ.⁵

(b) The unique work of Christ as the mediator of the consciousness of redemption, and as the creator of the personality of the new man, is next found to involve a unique dignity of His person. This peculiar dignity consists primarily in the fact that, while a

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 94.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 102.

³ 'The high-priestly office of Christ includes His perfect fulfilment of the law, or His active obedience, His atoning death, or His passive obedience, and the representation of believers with the Father.'—*Ibid.*, ii. p. 128.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 280. 'The Holy Spirit is the union of the divine being with human nature in the form of the collective spirit which animates the collective life of believers,' p. 223.

⁵ 'The Christian Church, as animated by the Holy Spirit, is in its purity and completeness the perfect image of the Redeemer, and every individual person who is regenerated is a complementary element of this society.'—*Ibid.*, p. 306.

historical person and not a creation of the imagination, or an idealised historical figure, He was also the archetypal man—the perfect prototype of a humanity which was new, and which also represented the highest possibility of spiritual life under the human form. The uniqueness of His person consisted in the fact that He possessed a perfect and unbroken sense of union with God, while He also realised to the full the destiny of man in His character of sinless perfection. He was the second Adam—impressive in His resemblance to the first, but still more impressive in the contrasts. He was like him in that He was truly man: He differed from him in that, in circumstances far more unfavourable than the primitive condition of the race—in a situation which involved Him in the life of a corrupt and degenerating society—He remained sinless and perfect in obedience. From this may be inferred the presence in Christ of an inward principle transcending the powers, not only of man as he is, but of man as he was first made.¹ He was like other great men in that, rising above His age and its conditions, He was yet closely knit to His kind and influenced its life; but He differed from them in that, while others have been one-sided in themselves and limited in their influence, He represents absolute perfection, that as the universal man He makes an appeal to the whole human race, and that He is the spiritual head which is capable of animating and sustaining the higher life of all mankind.

This transcendent dignity of Christ is explained by a peculiar presence of God in Christ. It is true that God, in virtue of His omnipresence and His omnipotence, is present in a sense in the whole universe and in all His creatures: that He is more fully present in animate than

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 40 ff.

in inanimate nature, and still more fully when we reach the rational creation; and that He manifests Himself in still increasing fulness where the rational life of humanity rises to the religious stage. In the religious sphere, however, His presence was partial and intermittent until the advent of Christ. Not only in Polytheism, but also at the Old Testament level, God was not fully present in devout men, since He was erroneously or at least inadequately conceived, and the religious impulse was overlaid and repressed by the demands and the prepotency of the sensuous nature. He was in Christ properly and fully in respect that in Him the higher religious consciousness was absolutely pure and dominant. 'In Him alone,' it is said, 'of the rational creation, was the being of God properly present, inasmuch as His religious consciousness was constant and exclusively determined every aspect of His self-consciousness, and this complete indwelling of God constituted His peculiar being and His innermost self.'¹ We can speak of a unique presence of God in Christ in respect that 'Christ alone truly mediates all being of God in the world, and all revelation of God through the world, in so far as He bears in Himself the whole creation in which a new vigour of the religious consciousness has been sustained and developed.'² He was, in short, the perfectly religious man, who is the fountain of true religion, and through living faith in whom we also may become perfectly religious.

(c) The extraordinary in the person of Christ, it is further held, points to extraordinary circumstances of origin.³ The conditions under which we enter the world, predetermined as we are to estrangement from God and the dominion of sin, must in His case have been

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 44.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 44 ff.

inoperative. In our case life is started with an endowment resulting from the conjunction of two sets of forces—one made up of heredity and social environment, the other an output of the divine power that works with elemental and originating energy in the workshop of human nature; and though the influence of those factors varies widely in different individuals, the resultant difference is only one of degree. But in Jesus the influence of heredity, so far as making for sinful tendencies, entirely disappeared; and the person was constituted by a creative act which lifted up human nature in Him to the plane of ideal perfection. By one and the same act He was emancipated from the sinister influences of natural heredity, and was made ready and meet for the dwelling of God in Him in fulness. It is not, indeed, maintained that it is a necessary part of this conception that Jesus should have been conceived in the womb of the Virgin apart from the natural process of generation.¹ The doctrine of the Virgin-birth would in any case require to be supplemented by the assumption of a creative act which preserved Jesus from the transmission of a taint of sin through His Mother; and the same doctrinal postulate would sufficiently safeguard His sinlessness even if He were supposed to have been begotten in the ordinary course of nature. The miracle of the Virgin-birth, that is, is on his view held to be superfluous, and this is confirmed by the fact that there is no consentient apostolic tradition which convincingly vouches for it.

(d) The person of Christ, then, according to Schleiermacher, was due to a creative act of God carried out in pursuit of the same decree which embraced the creation of man, and which embraces the regeneration

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 64 ff.

of those who are successively gathered into the Kingdom of God. His conception breaks with Rationalism in affirming the uniqueness of Christ, and also (in a sense) His supernatural origin; but it does not rise above the Sabellian conception that Christ was a manifestation in time of the God who as eternal exists above the plane of the triune distinction. What then is the idea of God which conditions Schleiermacher's doctrine of the person and work of Christ? The fundamental conception is that God is the reality upon which we are conscious of being absolutely independent. This feeling is awakened, not in relation to the world—which, though it may be infinite, is a partitioned and finitely disposed infinite—but only in relation to the simple and unconditioned infinite. 'To feel ourselves absolutely dependent,' we read, 'and to feel ourselves absolutely dependent upon God is one and the same thing.'¹ From this it appears that the idea of God is satisfied by the mere negative condition that it is not identical with the idea of the world, while its positive content may be left indeterminate. It is unnecessary, in particular, Schleiermacher held, to determine the idea of God in the sense of Theism. 'It is left open to every one,' he says, 'without prejudice to his claim to be of the Christian faith, to adopt any form of speculation regarding the being of God he may deem fit, provided always that his view supplies an object to which the feeling of absolute dependence can be related.'² His own construction of God emphasised the abstract simplicity of the divine being to a degree which reduces the divine being to the unknown and unknowable ground of the creative and redemptive process which meets us in the world. The attributes

¹ *Der Christliche Glaube*, 1^{te} Auf., i. p. 56.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 250.

are resolved into differences in the way in which we apprehend and interpret the working of a being who is Himself an undivided unity, and in whom knowing and willing coincide.¹ This type of theology is usually described as pantheistic, but it might even be described as a qualified Agnosticism—qualified by the retention of the category of causality as applicable to the relation of God and the world, and by a hope that it is competent to affirm what God does, although we may not trust ourselves to infer, from what He does, anything as to what He is in Himself.

II

It has already been observed that the system of Schleiermacher has the merit of reasserting the persistent conviction of Christendom that in the Christian religion blessings are bestowed upon mankind which are supremely worth having, and which are otherwise unattainable. The ethical quality of the benefits is also realised. The reiteration with which he insists that the essence of religion is devout feeling creates a provisional impression that all which he attributed to Christianity was the enjoyment of a refined spiritual luxury, and that even though this æsthetic indulgence were dispensed with, it might not entail any very serious detriment to character, to man's position in the world, and to the religious outlook. But this is a misunderstanding. The religious feeling which is fastened on as the distinctive religious experience is a state of consciousness in which the all-important

¹ *Der Christliche Glaube*, ii. p. 258. 'All attributes which we ascribe to God have the function, not of denoting something particular in God, but only of denoting something particular in the mode in which the feeling of absolute dependence is related to Him.'

difference has been made for character that the supremacy of the lower nature, with its sensuous and sin-bound propensities, has been broken, and that the whole of the inner habitudes of thought and volition are dominated by a trustful dependence on God, and by a reference to His will. Further, not only the new birth, but the growth of the devout and earnest type of character to which it gives rise, is regarded as conditioned by the maintenance of a vital communion with the risen Christ. As to the life to come, he so magnifies the grace and promise of the Christian religion as to make it appear more than doubtful if man can expect immortality apart from Christ and also incredible that those can perish who live in Christ.

1. The one serious deprivation which his system entails in the matter of religious blessings is involved in his resolution of justification into regeneration. The believer is left with the friendship of Christ, but God has retreated to an infinite distance as the mere author of the economy which has yielded Christ, and has liberated the quickening influences that bring a new creature into existence. From the religious point of view the all-important matter is that the individual stands in a relationship to God in which he is the immediate object of the divine love, and of a divine judgment of acceptance which involves forgiveness and deliverance from all evil; and it is impossible to acquiesce, without irreparable loss, in the view that this is a mere aspect or interpretation of what happens when the soul is quickened by a new experience on a similar plane to that on which Christ lived.

2. Schleiermacher's inadequate conception of the central blessing of Christianity is bound up with a defective conception of the conditions of salvation. If the

essential problem be the creation of a new personality with the Christlike experience, it is natural to conceive of the redemptive work of Christ as consisting merely in the transmission of His spirit to the souls which lay themselves open to His influence in the receptive attitude of faith. In taking this position Schleiermacher strongly, and, from his point of view, convincingly, asserts the Protestant tenet that faith in Christ is the subjective condition of justification; but, for the rest, he can hardly be said to meet the religious need which demands a work of Christ for us as well as a work of Christ within us. If we insist that, in addition to the problem of regeneration, there is a further question as to the conditions of acceptance with God, his view takes us back in principle to the Roman Catholic position that the basis of our religious assurance is what Christ has made of us through the operations of His grace. But a religious theory which, by whatever path, brings us back to the imperfect self as the ground of our confidence violates what may well be felt to be an axiom of the Christian religion. Our deepest spiritual need is to look away even from what has been divinely and graciously wrought in ourselves to a ground of confidence which is wholly of God, and perfectly worthy of God; and it is a mark of theological decadence to disturb religious assurance by transferring the gaze to the humiliated and imprisoned Christ that is discernible in the experiences even of the most Christlike of those who have entered on the new life.

3. It is a still more serious question whether the theology of Schleiermacher is adequate to support and to make effective the great salvation which (notwithstanding some deductions) he credits to the Christian

religion. The central idea is often expressed in terms which are indistinguishable from those in which a popular type of British evangelicalism makes everything to depend on personal intercourse with the risen and glorified Christ. He seems to resolve the scheme of salvation, as is increasingly common in a current form of the Gospel, into a friendship with Christ which is the source of all healing, energising and consoling influences. But apart from the question as to whether it is proper to lay stress on mystical union with Christ as the typical form of Christian experience, we may well ask if the underlying theology of Schleiermacher is such as to warrant the faith in Christ which he inculcated, and the position which he accorded to Him in the universe. Can the Christ of evangelical faith survive without a definitely theistic background? If Christ be the eternal Son of God who became incarnate, who has been exalted after His humiliation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and who has carried His human nature, and the sympathy learned in His human experience, into the being of God, it may well be believed that He sustains a saving relation to believing souls, and that the mystical union—though not necessarily realised in the experience of all disciples—is at least a conscious privilege of the more finely moulded and saintly souls. But is such a Christ possible if God be only the unknown ground of the world and of human experiences, and only conceived of as a personal being because human beings must construe Him with their finite thoughts? From Schleiermacher's standpoint in religious philosophy personal immortality is more than improbable, and it is still more improbable that Jesus Christ continues to exist in personal being as the centre of spiritual influences that are radiated into

believing hearts all over the world and from century to century. At the most He may stand as a symbol of the infinite being—as useful as all other symbols, but also as inadequate. It is, in fact, difficult to regard the Christ whom he sought to save from the shipwreck of Rationalism as other than a figure which ministers to the needs of imagination and heart, but which is quite inadequately guaranteed as reality except to a faith that cleaves to a personal God who is also the Father in heaven. It is the unforgettable service of Schleiermacher that he asserted the validity of Christian experience and the rights of Christian faith, and that he exalted the mediatorship of Christ; but the tendency of his scheme of thought was to give us a Christ who ousts the infinite being, if not from religious thinking, at least from the religious affections, and who if He be no more than a symbol of an unknown power on which all things depend, is also not merely an imperfect symbol but a questionable idol.