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**THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PRESENT-DAY MODERNISM,**

**A thesis  
presented to the faculty of  
Concordia Seminary,  
St. Louis, Mo.  
by**

**Herbert F. Glock**

**in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of**

**Bachelor of Divinity.**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Definition of Modernism - - - - - 1  
 History of Religious Modernism - - - -1-4  
 Purpose and plan in Mind - - - - -4

Part I: Present-Day Modernism on the Person of Christ

Jesus Christ as true God  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -4-6  
 Refutation - - - - -6-7  
 Jesus Christ as true Man  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -7-10  
 Refutation - - - - -10-12  
 The Virgin Birth and the Incarnation  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -12-15  
 Refutation - - - - -15-17  
 The Life of Jesus Christ  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -17-20  
 Refutation - - - - -20  
 The Death of Jesus Christ - - - - -21  
 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -21-23  
 Refutation - - - - -23-24  
 Christ as King  
 View of a Modernist - - - - -24  
 Refutation - - - - -24-25

Part II: Present-Day Modernism on the Mission of Jesus Christ

Definition - - - - - 26  
 Introduction  
 The Character of Christ with regard  
 to Sin - - - - -26-27  
 Jesus Christ as the Messiah  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -27-28  
 Refutation - - - - -28-29  
 The Mission of Jesus Christ according  
 to His Work  
 Concerning the Vicarious Atonement  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -29-31  
 Refutation - - - - -31-33  
 Concerning the Death of Jesus Christ  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -33-34  
 Refutation - - - - -35-36  
 Concerning the Vicarious Element in  
 Christ's Death  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -36  
 Refutation - - - - -36-37  
 Concerning the Specific Work of Christ  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -37-38  
 Refutation - - - - -38-39  
 The Mission of Jesus Christ according  
 to His Teachings  
 Views of Modernism - - - - -39-41  
 Refutation - - - - -41  
 Conclusion - - - - -41-42  
 Bibliography - - - - -43.



## THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PRESENT-DAY MODERNISM.

### Introduction:

**THE DEFINITION OF MODERNISM:** Modernism as a general concept is here distinguished from Modernism in its narrower sense, namely as used in the field of religion and as applied particularly to the subject of Christian theology. This religious Modernism is an attempt to adjust religious views to the spirit of modern progress. It is rather a temperamental or intellectual attitude than a series of propositions, and as such to-day, it is to be identified with and considered synonymous to religious liberalism. In Theology, liberalism is defined as the tendency which refuses to accept orthodox creeds and allows wide latitude with regard to religious beliefs.<sup>1)</sup> This is present-day Modernism.

**THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS MODERNISM:** This term officially designated in the Roman Catholic Church <sup>a movement</sup> to bring that Church into contact with methods of thought as developed chiefly by modern philosophic and critical scholarship. It was officially condemned in 1907 by pope Pius X as a departure from the system of St. Thomas Aquinas, the norm of that Church, and had flourished principally in England under the leadership of Father Tyrrell.<sup>2)</sup> The principles used were those of Kantism, pragmatism, evolution, and higher criticism. We find, then, that the sources of this movement are in another age and have continued to shed their influence in religious thinking to the present day. Since, however, the beginnings of even religious modernism and liberalism cover such a wide and extensive field of thought, only those principles can be traced which have a bearing upon our subject of Christology.

1) Liberalism, Concordia Cyclopaedia, p.406.

2) Modernism, Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge.



THE HISTORY OF CHRISTOLOGY IN MODERNISM: Modern Christologies arose in the age of Rationalism as a reaction against symbolical and scholastic theology, toward the close of the 18th Century. Whereas Orthodoxy emphasized the divine nature of Christ, this reaction went to the other extreme in ignoring the divine nature, falling back upon the purely human or Ebionitic Christ and emphasizing the human element in Christ and the Bible. Schleiermacher, 1768-1834, contributed much to the humanistic element, guarding the humanity of Christ from confusion with the divine, and starting all explanation from the basis of the human element in Christ. He with his school presented Christ as the perfect Man, the ideal of humanity realized.<sup>1)</sup>

This humanitarian conception developed to a unitarian Christology, which presents Christ as a mere man, although the wisest and best, and the model for imitation. Kant, 1724-1804, inaugurated this humanistic view of Christ as the representative of the moral ideal, but he distinguished the ideal Christ from the historical Christ.

Pantheistic Christology, introduced by Schelling, 1775-1854, and Hegel, 1770-1831, and developed by Baur, 1792-1860, and his school particularly, started from the idea of essential unity in the divine and human natures, as realized in the continuous incarnation of God and the human race as a whole, thus denying Christ as the one and only God-man. The proof rested on the negative proposition, as expressed by Strauss, 1808-1874, that "the Infinite cannot pour out its fulness into a single individual". Christ was represented as being the first to realize this unity, and He was thus its strongest and purest form.

Kenosis Christology, as sponsored by Thomasius, 1802-1875, in order to do justice to the true humanity of Christ, carried

1) Christology (Modern), Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge.



out the self-emptying act of the Logos, in Phil. 2, 7, to the extent that Christ, as the Son of God, laid aside His entire divine self-consciousness at the incarnation and regained it gradually, after the manner of purely human development. This is, then, a renunciation of the divine nature of Christ.<sup>1)</sup>

Ritschl, 1822-1889, furthered pantheistic Christology, presenting Christ as "unique in his own order", the revealer and bearer of religious and ethical truth. In this sense He is the Son of God, was conscious of a new relation to God, and had for His purpose the establishment of a universal ethical kingdom of God. Christ's physical origin was not to be explained, He was the revealer of God as "grace and truth". Christ's divinity consisted in His world-conquering power, His patience, and in the Christian community. In this sense He is equal with God. Ritschl emphasized the ethical element of Christianity and human experience as a test of Gospel principles.<sup>2)</sup>

Under the Social Gospel, which rose in prominence within the Christian Church after the Roman Catholic suppression of Modernism in 1907, the same principles which existed before shifted their emphasis from the Person of Christ, esteemed only for His humanity, to His teachings, applying them not so much to personal conduct as to mass salvation in social life and human relations. This tendency has been particularly emphasized after the World War. In it attention is focused upon the man, with latent abilities of his own, and the work of Christ merely serves as a pattern to call forth these inherent forces of natural man. Thus present-day Modernism has changed its center from Christology to Anthropology, merely because its Christology has become crystallized, while its Anthropology is still in a state of flux.

1) Kenosis, Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 384.

2) Christology (Modern), Schaff-Herzog, Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge.



**THE PURPOSE IN MIND:** It is only because modernistic Christology has become stabilized that it can now be summarily treated. Our purpose, then, is to present those christological views which form the self-evident background of present-day Modernism. However, since the views of Modernism are established only by the consensus of opinion, and not by official pronouncement, a study of its Christology requires a review of the present-day modernistic works. We purpose to summarize, then, these views on the various phases of Christ's life, according to His Person, and His Work and Teachings. The sources for present-day Modernism are limited practically to the past twenty years, 1910-1930. Even in this short span we still find development, but that must be an essential feature of Modernism.

**THE PLAN IN MIND:** A chronological or classified summary will be presented of present-day views on each phase of the general division: Christ's Person and Christ's Mission (His Work and His Teachings). All essential views which are not here included may be regarded as in agreement with biblical Christianity. Each modernistic phase will then be contrasted with the biblical doctrine by way of refutation. A short conclusion on the trend of modernistic views will close the dissertation.

## PART I.

### PRESENT-DAY MODERNISM ON THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

#### CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS TRUE GOD:

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** When we review the thoughts of Modernism on this doctrine in a chronological manner, we find that the outstanding leaders of 1900 were very decided in their opposition to this position of orthodox Christianity, but their successors after them, while retaining the views of their predecessors in essence, gradually cloaked their position by using orthodox terms for a substitute doctrine, divine immanence in man. Under this cover



the statements of modernists in the last decade only indirectly or by deduction deny Jesus Christ as true God, while they emphasize His humanity. Let us review those opinions.

W. De Witte Hyde, (p.69), says: "That the Father is greater than the Son is evident", and explains that by virtue of His perfect obedience Christ is God in humanity, since the belief in the true divinity of Christ does not rest on the Infancy Accounts in the Gospels, and any attempt to base the belief in the divinity of Christ on the miraculous is sure to alienate multitudes of Christian minds.<sup>1)</sup> It is evident here that the author uses "divinity" in the orthodox sense of being divine. We also note that a new interpretation is given to it, as being God in humanity. This is further explained when he says, "The Son of God is he who...still sees nature as the expression of an omniscient Mind", (p.50). This title of Sonship is therefore given to Jesus since it consists in the perception of the Divine Ideal in every concrete situation. He is the fulness of the Godhead, since we have in Him all of the divine nature and spirit that can be manifested in human form.

According to A. Fairburn, "Jesus Christ is neither God nor the Godhead incarnate, but He is the incarnate Son of God", thereby denying the unity and equality of the Godhead.<sup>2)</sup> W. Rauschenbusch declared that "within human limits Jesus acted as God acts", adding that Christ's non-resistance was an essential part of His God-consciousness.<sup>3)</sup> Behind this we see the *a priori* assumption that Christ is not true God, but only man.

"Christians have refused to raise a man to the rank of God, but they have persistently proclaimed that in and through the personality of Christ, God was manifesting Himself", speaks S. Mathews, (p.143), and explains that he does not deny what is popularly known

- 1) W. De Witte Hyde, *Outlines of Social Theology*, p.62-69.
- 2) A. Fairburn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p.475.
- 3) Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p.263.



H. GLOCK.  
as the deity of Christ, that is to say, the revealed presence of God to be met in His life. Concerning the explanations of the e-cumenical councils on this doctrine, he declares that neither the language nor the conception of "substance", as found in the Nicene Creed, is in the Bible or the first Christian writers.<sup>1)</sup> Thus he accepts the historicity of this doctrine, but denies its substance, explaining it as being a choice of pattern for that day, but requiring different expression to-day.

"Jesus was man, and he must be God in what sense he can be God being assuredly man", declares H.E. Fosdick. (p.258), explaining that the early Christians had to fight for the humanity of Christ, since His divinity was readily believed, while to-day "we must start from the certainty that he was truly man and then wonder in what sense he can be God" (p.256). However, he explains the divinity of Jesus as being only an historical expression of the central experience in Christian life--finding God in Christ. The divinity of Christ is, then, the revelation of the living God who seeks to be incarnate in every one of us.<sup>2)</sup> In this sense he quotes H.S. Coffin, that the deity of Jesus "is not primarily a statement concerning Jesus, ... but a statement concerning the invisible God".<sup>3)</sup> We see here the plain denial of Jesus Christ as God in the same sense God is God, rather presenting Him, by His religious experiences, as the First Christian.

VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURE: The Bible is yet the common meeting-ground for those who hold opposite positions concerning the deity of Jesus Christ in as far as it is the common source. The difference arises in the attempt by Modernism to reconcile by reason the seeming contradiction of Jesus Christ as both God and man. The resulting compromise has resulted in denying Jesus Christ as the true God, as shown by the testimony of many passages in Scripture.

1) Shailer Mathews, The faith of Modernism, p.138.

2) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.242-274.

3) Henry Sloan Coffin, In a Day of Social Rebuilding, p.58.



H. GLOCK.

"Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am! Then took they up stones to cast at Him", John 8, 58-59. This is Christ's self-testimony concerning His pre-existence and eternity, a divine prerequisite, and repeated in John 17, 24: "For Thou (the Father) lovedst Me before the foundation of the world". Again, Jesus claims for Himself equal honor with the Father, John 5, 23: "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him." But Jesus also claims identity with the Father, in a special sense over believers who can be called gods also, when He said, John 10, 30-39: "I and My Father are one.. (Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him... 'because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God')... Say ye of Him, whom the Lord hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?... Believe; that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Such passages are all self-testimony, to which can be added the witness of all the New Testament writers and witnesses, ascribing to Him attributes which can only fit deity. But before objecting extensively to the modernist position denying Jesus as true God, we should consider what they offer as substitute, and thereby judge. How, then, do they present Jesus Christ to us positively? They present Him as a perfect specimen of man.

#### CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS TRUE MAN:

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** We find that Modernism has a special purpose in mind in denouncing orthodoxy for not emphasizing Christ's humanity and in presenting this side of Christ's person as of first importance. In stressing Christ's humanity, they thereby wish to elevate mankind to equality with Christ. In doing this, they either lower Christ to the level of mankind and humanity, as shown in denying His Godship, or they elevate mankind and humanity to divinity



with Christ. The latter method is the favorite, and the procedure follows logical lines.

A modernist states: "One of our articles of belief that we hold least vividly is that He was made in fashion as a man. It may be true that, in circles outside the rank of Christian belief, the doctrine of His divinity seems incredible; but, within the Church, it is more true to say that it is His humanity that has become most attenuated." 1) With few exceptions, modernists regard Jesus Christ as a man, historically existent, and as a true character in history.

The new feature of Modernism is the interpretation of humanity as divinity, which is well brought out in the following. "The changes which have taken place in the conception of the person of Jesus Christ are due largely to the fact, that God and man are, by modern thinkers, no longer regarded as contrasted natures." 2) This author, W. Gladden, advises man to follow the human Christ, and through His humanity to approach His divinity, since God is immanent in creation and His fulness is found in humanity. Ritschl also is employed to confirm that the divinity of Christ is not so much a theoretical as a practical conception, since God means the practical power to help. Therefore he says, "Greater than his teaching is the character of Jesus", (p.135). "Everything that is essentially human is included in the nature of God; everything that is essentially divine is found in the nature of man. Divinity is finite in man; humanity is infinite in God", (p.137) (underscoring my own). There is then no contrariety of natures in Christ, but a common nature found both in God and in man. Christ is, then, the brightness of the Father's glory and the perfect flower of humanity, which means that so is God and so is man. This one nature of Christ's person is identified with our own nature, Christ then has but one

1) J.R.P. Sclater: Modernist Fundamentalism, p.68.

2) Washington Gladden: Present Day Theology, (2nd edition). p.127-8.



nature, and the Incarnation is no longer necessary as an explanation of dual natures in Christ.

But this human divinity is taught in more subtle form by E.M.Chapman: "What has come out of Jesus Christ into the experience of men must have been potentially resident there. The highest notion of God that men have ever attained and used have been gained, not merely from what he said, but from what he was."<sup>1</sup>) The assumption here is that Jesus was only a true man, and therefore His experiences are the potential property of mankind. Humanity is, then, presented with divine powers: "After our explanations and expositions, there remains a large residue of that aspect of humanity, which, escaping human formulas, merges with what we call the divine", (p.103). Thus the plan of salvation is shifted from Christ as its center to man possessing divine humanity, and Christ becomes merely the First Man, to show us the way to God.

The Bible admittedly does not present Christ as mere man, and therefore a modernist finds fault with the Bible. Sellars explains the contradictions by saying: "They" (the synoptic Gospels) "present an idealized picture of Jesus Christ after the flesh, whereas Paul preaches only the second Adam, Jesus Christ after the spirit".<sup>2</sup>) "The more we rid the narratives of their fairy-story accompaniment and see Jesus, not as a god who foreknows his human life and plays it out gravely as an actor who knows his role, but as a human being hurried to issues he has at first not dreamed of, the more his life becomes comprehensible", (p.83). Reason has here been enthroned to expurgate the Bible to fit the matter in hand, showing Christ as a man limited by conditions. This is the explanation of the "historic Christ".

After identifying humanity with divinity in Christ, Modernism then revises the whole means of salvation, Christ is there on-

1) E.M.Chapman, A Modernist and His Creed, p.105.

2) R.W.Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.72.



ly to be imitated. So Fosdick says: "Let us say it abruptly: it is not so much the humanity of Jesus that makes him imitable as it is his divinity"<sup>1)</sup> (italics his). From this, the definition of Christianity is "the religion of incarnation, and its central affirmation is that God can come into human life", (p.265). This will be treated more fully under the Work of Christ.

We find therefore, in the modernistic conception of Christ as true man, the stress laid upon personality, character, both in Christ and in man. Divinity thus becomes only a question of character. And so Rauschenbusch says: "So we have in Jesus a perfect religious personality, a spiritual life completely filled by the realization of a God who is love!"<sup>2)</sup> The application is found in our achieving our personality as Christ achieved this personality. The divinity of Jesus is, then, merely true humanity.

**VIEW OF SCRIPTURE:** The Bible indeed teaches Jesus Christ as a true man, but thereby it does distinguish between the two in the matter of sinfulness. Heb.4.15 says: "But (He) was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". Man is therefore separated from equality with Christ by sin, and this implies that man cannot follow Christ in imitation. But Modernism has sought to overcome this difference by denying or minimizing sin, but here they vary again with Scripture, Rom.3,23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

Modernism is established on the contention that the divinity of Jesus is the divinity of man. Accordingly every man, being of divine nature, is an incarnation of God, Jesus only being separated by a higher degree. To support this, they employ passages illustrating the relationship between believers and God and apply them to fallen and perverted mankind. But Scripture keeps a sharp

1) H.E.Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.270.

2) W.Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p.242-243.



distinction, Eph. 5, 8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord"; Eph. 2, 5: "Even when we were dead in sins, (He) hath quickened us together with Christ". They employ the religion of Christ as being the religion for man also, being equal to Christ. But Christ's religion was not Christianity, but the religion of Paradise, of untroubled sonship, wholly unfit as a religion for sinful humanity. Christianity alone can serve for our condition, the religion of the attainment of sonship by the redeeming work of Christ. But if Christianity is a way of getting rid of sin, then Jesus was not a Christian, since He had no sin to get rid of, and we cannot, then, find a complete illustration of the Christian life in the religious experience of Jesus. 1)

But the Jesus which Modernism has reconstructed as its example is not the Jesus of the Bible. This reconstruction is done by the historical interpretation of the times. R. Sellars says: "It is evident that religion is not independent of the social temper of an age". 2) The so-called "historic Christ" is simply the imaginary product of modern men; if he were taken as an example for men, disaster would follow. What man can speak as Jesus did: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth." But even with all their critical forces in play against the Gospels, the "historic Christ" resulting plainly presents Himself, not merely as an example of faith, but as an Object of faith. Thus Modernism regards Jesus Christ as an Example and Guide, but Christianity regards Him as the Savior; Modernism regards Him as the fairest flower of humanity, Christianity regards Him as a supernatural Person. 3) The one is artificial, the other is real.

1) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p. 91-92.

2) R.W. Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p. 74.

3) G.G. Machen, idem, p. 84 & 96.



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Besides elevating man to divinity, Modernism has also lowered God to humanity. Thus, liberals will say that Jesus is God, but mean thereby that merely the life of God, which appears in all men, appears with special clearness or richness in Jesus. The word "God" is sometimes used to denote simply the supreme object of man's desires, the highest thing that men know. In result they think desperately low of God. 1)

Because of the impossibility of reconstructing an "historic Christ" with any degree of certainty, some modernists favor the tendency of accepting Jesus as an ideal, a myth, regardless if He lived or not. 2) But by their compromises between divinity and humanity, modernists have in essence returned to the old doctrine of God's immanence, from the 18th Century, and have even approached the Pantheism of the ancients. The rest of Modernism, in the remaining branches of Christology, differ correspondingly from this fundamental distinction concerning the natures of Christ.

#### CONCERNING THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND THE INCARNATION:

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** Biblical Christianity does not distinguish in essence between these two terms, but Modernism does, in denying the former and in emphasizing the latter, spiritually. In rejecting the Virgin Birth, it is its basis as an historical fact that is universally denied, and in place we find a multitude of explanations covering the causes and the purposes for such an account in the Gospels. Each exponent has a different solution, usually explaining the doctrine as a product of the age or by a spiritual interpretation.

Historical explanations are found in the following. R.W. Sellars has: "Instead of being a monument of mystical insight, as

- 1) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p. 110.
- 2) John Horsch, Modern Religious Liberalism, p. 86.



theologians tell us, it was the consequence of a problem forced upon the Church".1) And the conception of the Trinity is represented as an attempt to combine gnostic polytheism and the monotheism of the Jews. Even where this account is recognized as historical, it is explained as a later tradition. "The conclusion that the Modernist draws from all this study is that there was a time in the history of the primitive Community when Jesus was preached as the Son of God, not only without allusion to the Virgin Birth, but by those who apparently either did not know the tradition or ignored it".2) A simple explanation from higher criticism is given by W.M. Forrest: "An account of a virgin birth was a natural and congenial way for first century folk to set forth any belief they had in the greatness or divinity of anyone."3)

As substitute for fact, Modernism prefers to tolerate the Virgin Birth narrative as a symbolical, spiritual explanation of divinity within the natural man. L. Parks puts it this way: "Modernism would have preferred that the doctrine should not have been called in question, but that emphasis should have been laid upon the sinlessness, the uniqueness, and the divinity of our Savior in such a way that, if historic fact were doubted, the truth might remain unquestioned".4) He regards this doctrine as a means of clamping upon the Church the "dreadful doctrine of Original Sin darkening human life". The Virgin Birth for him is merely a witness to the uniqueness of the Savior, but physical uniqueness is "deformity, and a denial of Perfect Humanity". His study of Scripture "has led to the conclusion that the evidence does not justify them" (the fundamentalists) "in stating that the Virgin Birth is a historic fact, but rather that it is a beautiful symbolic expression of the semblance and fundamental truth recorded in the fourth Gospel of The

1) R.W. Sellars, *The Next Step in Religion*. p.90.

2) L. Parks, *What is Modernism?* p.63.

3) W.M. Forrest, *Do Fundamentalists Play Fair?* p.114.

4) L. Parks, *idem*, p.49.



spiritual birth of every child of God, and therefore supremely true of the Perfect Son of God" (p.76), showing that He too was born of God. Thus Christ's divinity is identified with man's humanity. H. Fosdick says: "Then the incarnation of Christ is the prophecy and hope of God's indwelling in every one of us". 1) This thought is repeated time and again, calling Christianity "the religion of incarnation". However, the incarnation consists in only a portion of God, namely "character, purpose, redeeming love", for "all the best in us is God in us".

Modernism has employed for its proofs against the Virgin Birth the objections of higher criticism. In general, the accounts of the Virgin Birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are regarded as stories of a later addition, and not a part of the original. To this they add the fact that Paul, the first writer, makes no specific reference to the Virgin Birth, that Mark, the first evangelist, does not refer to this event, and that Peter knows nothing of it, while the fourth Gospel, written last, makes no reference to it. The account by Matthew is excused on the basis of comprising a collection of "sayings of Jesus", therefore of late origin, and inserted into the Gospel as a fulfilment of Is. 7, 14. This Old Testament passage is interpreted as not referring to a virgin, since "almah" designates a young woman of marriageable age, but to Isaiah's wife, who was to have a child at the time of certain historical events. The passage on Immanuel in Is. 9 is regarded as a promise of God's presence as a protecting power in Zion, and fulfilled within a few years. This<sup>all</sup> is based on the assumption that ancient writers had no scruples to say a thing took place because it ought to, and therefore the Evangelist Matthew wrote in this manner. Concerning the Lukan account, L. Parks presents the difficulty in a pleasing light: "There are but two verses in Luke which are incompatible with the theory that our Lord was born in wedlock. If these two verses were 1) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.271.



omitted--which would not affect the continuity of the narrative--  
we should pass out of poetry into history... We are compelled to  
ask if those verses express what one would expect from the writ-  
ings of Luke."1) Luke then could not have written this, since Paul  
his teacher knew nothing of the Virgin Birth, therefore the account  
represents only a story current in Palestine. Additional objections  
to the historicity of this event are found in Christ's public den-  
ial of Mary, in Mark 3,33; that both genealogical accounts of Jesus  
make Him the son of Joseph; that Mary speaks of Joseph as the fa-  
ther of Jesus, but does not understand Jesus' reference to God His  
Father; that the birth stories contradict in several points; that  
the Virgin Birth throws discredit upon the sacredness of marriage;  
and that no moral greatness is added by this belief, and nothing  
is lost in saying that Christ was born as ordinary children. S.  
Mathews sums up the whole nicely in italics: "If these" (the Gospel  
sources) "are authentic, we have miracle pure and simple. If they  
are not authentic, there is no further problem to answer".2)

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: The motives of modernists in discrediting  
the Virgin Birth we have seen in their attempt to bring down Christ  
to the level of ordinary humanity. That Scripture, as we have it,  
teaches the Virgin Birth of Christ is admitted by all honest crit-  
ics; but all other references to this event can be disposed of by  
other interpretations, except the accounts in Matthew and Luke.  
Should either of these accounts be proven unauthentic, then the  
other must go with it. Of the two, the Lucan account has offered  
more favorable occasion for higher critics to employ their favor-  
ite method of procedure, namely to regard it as an interpolation  
of later origin into the original text. "The overwhelming majority  
of those who reject the Virgin Birth also reject the whole super-  
natural content of the New Testament".3)

1) L. Parks, What Is Modernism? p.74.

2) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.141.

3) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.108.



Against the idea that an insertion was made into the completed Gospel of Luke, we have the unanimity of manuscript evidence for the inclusion of the two verses under contention, Luke 1,34-35. Against the argument that the author here made a blind insertion, G.G.Machen says correctly: "It is not correct to say that if one passage, Luke 1,34-35, were deleted, the attestation of the virgin birth would be removed from the Lucan infancy narrative. If that passage is an interpolation, then at least one (Ch.1.27) and probably two other passages (Ch.2,5 & 3,23) must also be regarded as having been tampered with. But obviously every addition of such ancillary suppositions renders the original hypothesis less plausible". 1) Against the argument that the Davidic descent of Jesus here proves Joseph the father, we have this fact, supported by F.C. Burkitt, "that the word 'begat' in the Matthean genealogy does not indicate physical paternity, but only the transmission of legal heirship, so that even if the genealogy" (in Luke) "had ended with the words 'Joseph begat Jesus', that would not have afforded the slightest indication that the author did not believe in the virgin birth" (p.541-542). Against the contention that the terms "father" and "parents" invalidate the Virgin Birth, it must be said such terms are thoroughly natural even for a narrator believing the Virgin Birth. "For, as we have just observed in connection with the matter of the Davidic descent, such terms could well be used on Semitic ground to describe even an ordinary adoptive relationship--to say nothing of the altogether unique relationship in which ... Joseph stood to the child Jesus" (p.543). Against the argument that Mary's bewilderment at those evidences of high position in her Son, it can be said that "the wonder in Mary's heart... does not exclude the greater miracle of His conception in the womb, but on the contrary contributes to the picture of which that greater miracle is an integral part" (p.549). These two verses contain

1) G.G.Machen, The Integrity of the Lucan Narrative of the Annunciation, Princeton Theo. Review, Oct. 1927.



the same character in style and language as anywhere else in the Gospel, and any arguments on this basis for interpolation are quite impossible.

As to the impossibility of the contents in the narrative story, objection has been raised to Mary's question in Luke 1,34. For this it can be said, "we might almost be tempted to say that a certain lack of logic in Mary's words is a positive indication of their authenticity and of their original presence in this narrative" (p.564). An interpolator would hardly increase difficulties consciously.

For positive argumentation against any interpolation in Luke, "it has been well observed that Mary's words of submission in Luke 1,38 are without point if there has been no prophecy of the virgin birth in what precedes" (p.567). And V.45 presupposes far more than V.38. and V.36ff presupposes V.34ff in the clearest possible way. Luke 2,51, on the Child's submission, indicates by its mention that such submission was an extraordinary and noteworthy thing. And perhaps the strongest proof for authenticity exists in the remarkable parallelism between the account of Mary's annunciation and that to Zacharias, Luke 1,11-20. The comparison is so remarkable that any hypothesis holding that it came by chance makes itself inconceivable. By the supposed insertion of V.34-35, we would have an interpolator who could "fill up in the most beautiful fashion a parallelism which otherwise would have been incomplete!" (p. 574). "Real harmony with the rest of the narrative, and superficial difficulty---these are the recognized marks of genuineness in any ancient work. And both these appear in Luke 1,34-35" (p. 576). Thus this account must be accepted as authentic, if only from the position of honest scholarship.

CONCERNING THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST:



**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** With the earthly life of Christ, the modernists have encountered somewhat of a dilemma. If the biography of Christ, as we have it, is to be accepted, then the record given there presents us with a more than human person. We have His recorded miracles, and S. Mathews somewhat avoids them when he says: "The Modernists will not insist upon miracles, but he believes that God is active and mysteriously present in the ordered course of nature and social evolution".<sup>1)</sup> This is a practical denial of miracles, since they occur outside of "the ordered course of nature". Moreover, consistent with the idea of a divine humanity, L. Parks maintains miracles belong to man's domain. He states it negatively: "What he" (the modernist) "does deny is the assertion that miracles are the supreme evidence of the supernatural... that life in general is separated from God".<sup>2)</sup> The usual method, then, of Modernism is not the outright denial of miracles, but an elaborate attempt to explain them away. E.M. Chapman refers to some as wonder-traditions or legends, others as "true transcripts of impressions produced", others as having different explanations to-day. The unaccountable miracles are "echoes of events caused by a power or according to a method that we should find almost equally mysterious to-day".<sup>3)</sup> Jesus thus had a measure of wonder-working power, thus He is not a mere man, but a glorious man! We find, then, even in the miracles, a consistent attempt to deny anything to Christ which can not also be attributed to man. This is a consistent denial of His Godhead.

On the other side of the dilemma, if the Gospel accounts are rejected, then we can have no definite or reliable information concerning Him. And yet, it is in this atmosphere that Modernism thrives, for it affords to each the privilege of picking out from the accounts whatever supports his own peculiar views and interpretations.

1) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.176.

2) L. Parks, What Is Modernism? p.20.

3) E.M. Chapman, A Modernist and His Creed, p.103.



It is in this spirit that Christ's life is presented by Modernism, namely to reveal His earthly life as a man's experience with God-consciousness, all within the powers of ordinary man to acquire.

The rejection of the Gospel accounts on Christ's life is made by R.Sellars: "Only after the gospel has been radically revised are we likely to be near an old tradition of the life and deeds of Jesus".<sup>1)</sup> The emphasis of Modernism is placed primarily upon the personality and character of Christ. His influence is admittedly unique. His life is viewed as a concrete historic situation, which is then analyzed as seen fit. In trying to account for this unique influence, H.E.Fosdick explains it thus: "It may be an accident; it may signify nothing at all beyond its own mysterious uniqueness. But, on the other hand, it may be a revelation--the discovery of a universal flow everywhere available and belonging to the substance of creation... It is a revelation of creative reality".<sup>2)</sup> Thus Christ the man is pictured as the unconscious revealer of latent forces in man. J.F.Clarke has the same idea of development of purpose in Christ's life, in which, by gradual steps, Christ came to the conviction that He was, by God's providence, the king of the world and the man of men. He admits little support for this from the Gospels when he says: "We know nothing of the growth of his soul".<sup>3)</sup>

It is perhaps the Social Gospel adherents who have particularly emphasized the character of Christ as expressed in His life. With them divinity is only a question of character, and they present supremely a "personal Christ". Rauschenbusch summarizes it thus: "The social gospel is not primarily interested in metaphysics; its christological interest is all for a real personality who could set a great historical process in motion; it wants his work interpreted by the purposes which ruled and directed his active life;

1) R.W.Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.77.

2) H.E.Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.260.

3) J.F.Clarke, Common-Sense in Religion, 18th Impression, p.314.



it would have more interest in basing the divine quality of his personality on free and ethical acts of his will than in dwelling on the passive inheritance of a divine essence".1)

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: The life of Christ is presented in Scripture as that of a supernatural Person, while living on earth. The question of His miracles and life is the question of accepting or rejecting the Savior of the New Testament. In rejecting the miracles, Jesus becomes the fairest flower of humanity who made such an impression on His disciples that hallucinations came to them after His death.

And concerning Christ as a social reformer, S. Mathews says: "Almost nothing could be farther from the picture of Jesus which lies in the oldest material at our disposal than that of a social reformer;" (Own underscoring)?) In Scripture man exists for the sake of God, but in the Social Gospel of Modernism, in practice if not in theory, God exists for the sake of man. G.G. Machen characterizes this feature: "The liberal believes that applied Christianity is all there is of Christianity; Christianity being merely a way of life"<sup>3)</sup>.3)

The scriptural explanation of Christ's personality and character is given in His being true God in human form. Only such an explanation can account for His "unique" and inimitable life. Confessions of such character we have from John(1,14): "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"; from Peter(Matt.13,16): "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and from Paul(Col.2.9): "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". To this we must say(Rom.15.4): "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning", not for our choice in rejection.

- 1) W. Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p.150-151.
- 2) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.131.
- 3) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.155.



## CONCERNING THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST:

This subject can better be discussed in relation to its significance, as a subdivision under the Mission of Christ (Second Section). It is sufficient here to say that Modernism regards Christ's death as that of a mere man, and due to forces, accidental or resultant, from His ethical position. At least His death is not denied. Perhaps the most dismal view is held by A.W. Sellars, when after depicting Christ's life as one of more or less chance, he says: "It was only on the cross that he finally gave up hope".<sup>1)</sup> Other modernists have perhaps more grandiloquent views on this topic.

## CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST:

VIEWES OF MODERNISM: On this topic we find an almost unanimous denial of the resurrection as a historical event, and instead a "spiritual", but rather metaphysical, interpretation. The objections raised in rejecting the historical event are all based on rational grounds, and assume various forms, as questionable texts, psychological reactions, church tradition.

This is well illustrated in the words of the otherwise soft-treading S. Mathews: "Whether his body came out of the tomb or his appearances to his disciples are explicable only by abnormal psychology, he is still living personally in whatever may be the conditions in which they dead now are. It may be just as inexplicable, but it is not so incredible", (own underscoring)?) J. Sclater is unique in his explanation, based on the idea that the Christ person was a myth, while Jesus was a historical character. He therefore says: "There is, of course, a distinction which can be drawn between Jesus and the risen Christ, which it is well always to bear in mind. Jesus is the actual physical being who waked this earth; .... while the risen Christ is the glorious object of our worship, eternal in the heart of God. It is the distinction between the divinity of Jesus and the

1) A.W. Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.82.

2) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.154.



deity of the risen Christ"(his italics).1)

The Resurrection, in the hands of Modernism, has become something equal to that fame which exists after the death of a hero, it is a glorified memory. W.M.Forrest has this in mind when he says: "Modernism has a right to say it believes in the resurrection when it means it believes in the conscious, personal immortality of Jesus".2) L.Parks has a similar explanation: "If it"(the resurrection)"means that Jesus revealed himself in the supreme personality which emerged after the experience of death, we are on sure ground".3) So Christ's appearances seem to imply a "vision", but no <sup>material</sup> ~~corporeal~~ materialization, and is explained as a later experience of the Church communing with its living Lord, since the Gospel of John shows a steady progress from a "vision of glory" to a corporeal companionship. A "spiritual" interpretation is applied to John's record where he says: "These appearances are judged....by the faith of a disciple, a disciple who is convinced that the full personality of Jesus was exalted to the presence of God, and that through that exaltation power was given to enter into communion with the soul that was seeking him".4) John's testimony, then, must be taken with a pinch of salt, the resurrection is a spiritual communion, some manifestation of risen life which produced an effect upon the individual. This is spiritualism, communion with departed souls.

The objections raised by Modernism to a corporeal issuance of Christ from the grave are of the same order as those raised against the Virgin Birth. The narratives are regarded as false, as Sellars puts it: "The rest of the traditional narrative"(after Christ's death) "is unquestionably mythical".5) S.Mathews says we must admit the possibility that certain anecdotes in the gospels are not strictly

1) J.R.P.Sclater, Modernist Fundamentalism, p.60.

2) W.M.Forrest, Do Fundamentalists Play Fair? p.114.

3) L.Parks, What Is Modernism, p.48.

4) idem, p.46.

5) A.W.Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.82.



historical, but the modernist is not concerned about the extent of their literalness," he knows that some experiences took place... Even if some of these narratives be legendary they are historical expressions of the early faith that Jesus has shown himself alive after his passion".<sup>1)</sup> Thus the resurrection becomes only an expression of first Century faith. Modernism also says that the last chapter of Mark comes to us in mutilated form, v.9ff. having been added from Matthew's Gospel. The favorite reference, however, is to St. Paul, who is presented as not knowing the nature of Christ's resurrection-body. Sellars says: "Paul speaks of him as buried and evidently thinks of the risen Jesus as an incorruptible or spiritual man, Paul did not believe in a bodily resurrection" (p.32)<sup>2)</sup> Therefore the Modernist's faith in the resurrection, according to Mathews, is thus: "The faith of the Modernist in the risen Jesus rests rather upon the trustworthy testimony of Paul, the critical recovery of the sources of the gospels, and the continued influence of the faith of the disciples embodied in the Christian movement" (p.155).

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: That Scripture teaches the bodily resurrection of Christ is best shown by the conduct of modernists toward Scripture, namely by declaring those narratives to be myths and legends, thereby witnessing to a doctrine which they reject. They cannot even reconstrue a false interpretation of the Gospels. It is for this reason that they take such ready refuge to Paul's 1Cor.15, since it can more readily be misinterpreted. In this chapter Paul has for his subject the resurrection of the dead and its nature, using, as a premise, Christ's resurrection, v,2.4: "If ye keep in memory... that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture". That Paul spoke of a bodily resurrection is shown from the questions of His opponents, v.35: "But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" His answer shows that they have not

1) S.Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.153.

2) A.W.Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.32.



misunderstood him, but, as the modernists, they had questioned the reasonableness of his teaching. The contention of Modernism is likely based on v.44: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body". And yet they are refuted by the same verse, for what is raised? The only answer can be that the body is raised, and this is what Modernism denies. The essence of their objection is again rationalism. G.G.Machen characterizes their position thus: "(They) make of the 'resurrection' just what the 'resurrection' does not mean--a permanence of the influence of Jesus or a mere spiritual existence of Jesus beyond the grave".1)

#### CONCERNING CHRIST AS KING:

VIEW OF A MODERNIST: One modernist has attempted to translate this doctrine <sup>into</sup> the thought of his school. In so doing he has employed the same methods as with the Resurrection, namely, explaining Christ's prophecy of His return in glory as the thought of His day and age, with a spiritual use for the present day. Thus Jesus believed, according to J. Clarke, in the establishment of a temporal religious kingdom: "The expectation of Jesus, therefore, was of his own speedy coming as a king".2) He wanted a universal religion of Jewish faith with a monotheistic spirit. "He was only disappointed as to the time and manner" (p.323). Concerning His final return in judgment, Clarke employs the spiritual interpretation: "He knew he should come in the clouds of heaven; that is, in the mystery and majesty of spiritual conviction" (p.323) (own underscoring).

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: Christ Himself has told us His kingdom was not temporal or earthly, John 18,36: "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence". But Christ also taught a visible return, Luke 21,27:

1) G.G.Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.108.

2) J.F.Clarke, Common-Sense in Religion, 18th Impression, p, 322.



"And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory". The context makes any spiritual interpretation impossible, for the signs of the last times cannot be understood spiritually. This doctrine, then, illustrates well the typical procedure in handling all the facts and events in connection with the life of Christ.

End of Part I.



PART II.

PRESENT-DAY MODERNISM ON THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

**DEFINITION:** Under this caption we must simply understand Modernism's application of Christ's life to humanity. It may, therefore, also be termed: The Soteriology of Modernism. In this Part II, the distinctions and terms of orthodoxy cannot apply, for, according to its very nature, Modernism does not distinguish between the work of Jesus Christ from God's viewpoint and His work from man's viewpoint. The reason for this we saw in the first division, Jesus Christ is only man.

Having viewed Christ's life in historic light entirely, Modernism hastens to apply it to humanity to-day. It is on the basis of To-day, as its very name implies, that Modernism explains everything. The past is interpreted from this vantage point, and they approach Christ and His work as we would any ancient philosopher. In this division Modernism seeks to determine the mission of Christ for man. It is not so much what Christ did for man, but what Christ left for man to do. After two introductory thoughts, Christ's mission will be considered: According to His Work, and According to His Teachings.

**INTRODUCTION:** To gain the viewpoint of Modernism, we ought to consider one old point and a new one:

**CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST WITH REGARD TO SIN:** This question presents Modernism with another dilemma and affords it untold difficulty. Modernists dare not affirm that Christ is sinless as long as man is sinful, no matter in how mild a form sin is presented. And yet this argues against Christ being in every respect one of us and therefore imitable. Now will Modernists declare that Jesus Christ is sinful, for then He would not be a perfect pattern for elevating man. G.G. Machen says: "If Jesus was sinful like other men, the last remnant of his uniqueness would seem to have disappeared, and all conformity with the previous development of Christianity would



seem to be destroyed".1) Yet on this side, some Modernists have been consistent enough in their logic to declare Christ a human being with his weaknesses, on the same level with the O.T. prophets and Greek philosophers.2)

However, Modernism seeks a compromise in this question by not preferring to answer it, and instead to insist on a middle path. Modernists prefer to classify Jesus Christ as being, at any rate, immeasurably above the rest of us, one who became humanly perfect--by development.

Compared with Scripture, any position of Modernism is wrong which does not maintain the sinlessness of Christ. He is presented to us with an absence of the sense of sin, and this is supported by His immediate and most intimate followers. Christ said: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin"?(John 8,46). Therefore John says: "In Him is no sin", (1John 3,5), and Paul declares: "He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us", (2Cor.5,21).

#### CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST AS THE MESSIAH:

Views of Modernism: In general Modernism regards this term as a historical mode of expression, no longer adequate for to-day. The complaint is against the sufficiency of the Bible phraseology to represent Christ in the thought of to-day. "The first creed of the Jewish Christians was simply the Messiahship of Jesus".3) Therefore Modernism regards this subject with little significance, except as a historical question. Opinions vary also in this respect. A.W.Sellars says: "Jesus was not the Messiah for the simple reason that there is no such person".4) This office is then regarded as a creation of religious and race imagination. S.Mathews in his ambiguous way states: "The sources show that Jesus did share in the messianic estimate of himself... Yet the inherited messianic hope inherited by his disciples,

1) G.G.Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.87.

2) J.Horsch, Modern Religious Liberalism, p.87-88.

3) H.E.Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.218.

4) A.W.Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p.84.



...he attempted to correct".1) This may be a true statement, but it represents an exception, for "scholars differ as to whether, in spite of the words ascribed to him, Jesus held this thought of himself or even called himself Messiah as all".2)

However, H.E. Fosdick has attempted to interpret Christ's messiahship in modern terms. In view of Christ's work, that He could "give the world its loftiest thought of God, lift to its noblest heights man's estimate of his own worth and possibility, bring to men moral reclamation and renewal, give the world its loftiest ethical ideals, its most appealing and effective outpouring of sacrificial saviorhood, its most satisfactory object of personal loyalty and devotion", then Jesus is the Messiah, "the way of saying that God had especially anointed one to mediate his sovereignty over all mankind", "one who had been especially chosen to establish God's victorious kingdom in the earth". "Divine substance and nature, ontological equality with God, were not involved in Messiahship at all"(p.233-4).

Another explanation by Modernism holds that the messianic consciousness arose late in Jesus' experience, not as fundamental, but as an afterthought. But this theory has not even a scriptural basis, that Jesus succumbed to this prevalent doctrine, claiming to be the judge of all the earth, in order to bolster up His cause and strengthen His following. This would be a moral defect, and a poor example even for Modernism.3)

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: Modernism itself admits that words ascribed to Jesus Christ claim Messiahship, and attempts to question the sources are too poor to be adopted even by them. Nor can Christ's claim for Messiahship be separated from His claim of equality with God, for the latter is the basis of His identity as the Messiah. "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth

1) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.129.  
2) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.214.  
3) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.86.



that Prophet that should come into the world", (John 6,14). "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye Him" (Matt. 17, 5). But Jesus' claims of sovereignty are beyond the limits of humanity, as shown in His coming to judgment, Matt. 25. His fulfillment of O.T. prophecy is the essence of His Messiahship, rather than a divine appointment. It seems Modernism to-day has as much misconstrued His Messiahship as the Jews in Christ's day had.

THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO HIS WORK:

CONCERNING THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT:

VIEWS OF MODERNISM: (Denials) The general attitude of Modernism toward the interpretation of Christ's work has been critical from a historical viewpoint. It has adopted the policy of reviewing the interpretations given to the Cross of Christ throughout the centuries as products of the age. "The Cross of Christ, like every other abiding element in man's life, has passed through interpretation and reinterpretation as the thought of it has been poured from one generation's mental receptacles into another's". 1) Fairburn, Fosdick, Gladden, Mathews, and Robinson have arranged these interpretations in chronological order: the sacrificial explanation, drawn from sacrifices meant to expiate sin; the ransom theory or "pious fraud", in which Christ was given to Satan in exchange for man; the infinite honor theory, formed by Anselm to fit feudal thought, that Christ suffered to satisfy God's honor, thereby justifying the sinner; the monarchical theory, that Christ's death satisfied the punitive justice of God; the judicial theory, framed by Grotius to fit legal society and constitutional monarchy, that Jesus suffered to vindicate God the Lawgiver; the social theory, fitted for bourgeois society, that the Crucifixion was a debt which God paid to satisfy creditors. Besides these, there are many minor theories which gained less influ-

1) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p. 230.



ence. And because all these theories were accepted by the masses, the whole is called social theology.

The contention of Modernism is that these theories have "warped and distorted" the Cross of Christ out of its vital significance. It therefore rejects them all as being unsuited for the present day and modern thought. W.M.Forrest says: "'Redemption' may still be employed, although men no longer think it means a price paid by Christ to the Devil to let men go",<sup>1)</sup> (underscoring my own). Fosdick characterizes it thus: "Yet, warped and distorted out of its vital significance, as it often has been, by categories that had no relation with its original meaning and were essentially unfitted to represent its deepest truth, the Cross of Christ has been the most subduing, impressive and significant fact in the spiritual history of man".<sup>2)</sup>

A second objection raised by Modernism to the vicarious atonement as interpreted by biblical Christianity is based on the ground that it is narrow in binding salvation to the name of Jesus, that Christianity is too exclusive. "Wherever one meets vicarious sacrifice --" (Livingstone, Father Damien, Florence Nightingale) "--it always is the most subduing and impressive fact that mankind can face." (p.231)

A third objection of Modernism is the contention that one person cannot suffer for the sins of another, that instead men have lost sight of the majesty of Christ's person, who was a man like themselves. W.Gladden says: "It is impossible, then, for any man of sane morality to admit the justice of punishing an innocent person for a guilty person's sin".<sup>3)</sup> The argument is based on the principle that justice is not satisfied if the penalty is inflicted on another.

A fourth objection to be considered against the vicarious atonement of Christianity is based on the character of God, that it represents God as coldly waiting for a price to be paid, that this is repugnant to our sense of right, that God as the Judge of all the

1) W.M.Forrest, Do Fundamentalists Play Fair? p.113.

2) H.E.Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.230-1.

3) W.Gladden, Present-Day Theology, 2nd edition, p.155.



earth will do right, and therefore such conduct, reprehensible to man, cannot be ascribed to God. W. Gladden says: "It is simply impossible for any sane man to believe that Jesus Christ endured remorse, the sense of guilt, a condemning conscience, alienation from God, moral deterioration, and a tendency to permanence in the states that follow sin". 1) He quotes Clarke as saying: "No, I can never believe that Jesus, in the moment of agony, was forsaken or believed himself to be forsaken by the ever faithful God". (p.156)

VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: The general attitude of Modernism with regard to the historical interpretation of the vicarious atonement is at fault inasmuch as it goes too far in repudiating all former interpretations as false. In all these historical explanations, we note that the essence of vicarious atonement is supreme, and this is the heart of Scripture teaching. Freedom of thought to apply this truth to the particular mode of thought in each age is the essence of the Christian ministry. 1Tim.2,6 says: "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time". 2Cor.5,18 declares: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation". Thus the Christian way of salvation is not dependent upon history. "A gospel independent of history is a contradiction in terms". 2) Any liberal exhortation of Modernism cannot remove the dreadful fact of sin, nor offer a better substitute for the old, yet new, Gospel.

The second objection to the exclusiveness of Christianity causes Jesus Christ to be placed beside the other benefactors of mankind, and thereby renders Modernism perfectly inoffensive, but especially perfectly futile and fruitless, in the modern world. By ~~the~~ removing the offence of the Cross, they remove also its power and glory. 3) Christ says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto

1) W. Gladden, Present-Day Theology, 2nd edition, p.155, 2) *idem*, p.123.  
 2) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.121.  
 3) *idem*, p.123.



the Father but by Me", (John 14,6). Paul declares: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved", (Acts 4,12). The fact that truth is always single accounts for the narrowness of Christianity.

The third objection that justice cannot punish the innocent for the guilty proves the Bible's emphasis on the majesty of Christ's person. The position of Modernism here is a logical sequence in their denial of the Deity of Christ, regarded only as mere man. In human circles this objection might avail, but here in contrast it shows the necessity that Christ should be the Son of God. Therefore: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world", (John 1,29). "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin", (1 John 1.7). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son", (Rom. 5,10). In summary, G.G. Machen says: "The Christian doctrine of the atonement, therefore, is altogether rooted in the Christian doctrine of the deity of Christ".<sup>1)</sup> "Modern liberal teachers persist in speaking of the sacrifice of Christ as though it were a sacrifice made by some other than God", (p.132). "To deny the necessity of atonement is to deny the existence of a real moral order. Jesus recognized the existence of retributive justice; Jesus was far from accepting the light modern view of sin", (p.131).

The fourth objection, that God's character is inconsistent with the idea of atonement, is disproven by God's revelation of Himself. Modernism professes to worship the God revealed by Jesus Christ, but in the same breath reject His revelations, as Mark 15,34: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" John 18,11 shows Jesus revealing His Father's will: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" The chief cause here is Modernism's conception of the true God being only Love and Kindness, entirely overlooking Him as a Just and Righteous God. Paul also identifies

1) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p.126.



this mode of thinking in Rom.3,5:"Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? I speak as a man." Scripture plainly teaches a vicarious atonement performed by the God who is Love.

**CONCERNING THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST:** Since this is the vicarious atonement in the particular, special emphasis has been given to it both by Modernism and biblical Christianity.

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** The fact and the manner of Christ's death are not denied by Modernism, but Modernists differ as to the cause and purpose of His death. Thus W. Rauschenbusch explains Christ's death as being of one piece with His life, meaning that it was a necessary consequence of His conduct and the most dramatic assertion of His personality. The terms of "satisfaction", "substitution", "imputation", "merit" are objected to as being post-biblical. The death of Jesus was caused by organized evil, "solidarity", as represented in 6 public sins of organized society. In bearing these sins, which are causally connected with all private sins, Christ bore our sins, which resulted in His death. These sins are: religious bigotry, the combination of graft and political power, the corruption of justice, the mob spirit, militarism, and class contempt. "Jesus bore these sins in no legal or artificial manner, but in their impact on his own body and soul. They were not only the sins of Caiaphas, Pilate, or Judas, but the social sin of all mankind, to which all who ever lived have contributed, and under which all who ever lived have suffered".<sup>1)</sup> To account for how we are saved from the sins accumulated since Christ's death, he later writes: "In so far then as we, by our conscious actions or our passive consent, have repeated the sins which killed Jesus, we have made ourselves guilty of his death", (p.259). And yet for its purpose, he explains Christ's death as an inspirational influence: "What the death of Jesus now does for us, the death of the prophets did for him", (p.262). Christ's death is then a conclusive

1) W. Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p.57.



demonstration of the power of sin(social) in humanity, His death was a supreme revelation of love, reinforcing prophetic religion. In reconciling God and man, Christ merely becomes the initiator. We find in Rauschenbusch's position the summary and starting-point of further interpretations on Christ's death.

S. Mathews adopts Christ's death as a pattern intended to show man the triumph of good motives over evil forces. He says: "Christ does not save by dying, but he died because he saved. His death is an element in the revelation of the way of salvation.... Yet it (the sacrifice) is only a pattern. Strictly speaking, Jesus was not a sacrifice", since His enemies executed Him.<sup>1)</sup> "If he had not submitted to death, he could not have demonstrated that the life of love is triumphant over impersonal forces and death itself. (*Italics:*) The death and resurrection of Christ help us interpret that long evolutionary struggle from which human life has emerged and which carries it on. (*Ordinary:*) A life which is superior to the circumstances of the impersonal world and capable of moral perfection, is in consequence superior to death", (p.161).

D. Robinson, in becoming the echo of Fosdick, explains Christ's death as the embodiment of the divine purpose in a form in which men can adore it, namely it shows us how to apply the facts of vicarious sacrifice in modern experience to its significance in the moral and spiritual world. This is the deep symbolic meaning and purpose of Christ's death.<sup>2)</sup> Fosdick has explained Christ's death as a "challenge to sacrificial living" of our own, under the sub-topic: the historical Christ has given the world the most appealing and effective exhibition of vicarious sacrifice.<sup>3)</sup> Here again we find the death of Jesus interpreted as an inspirational example.

1) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p.155-6.

2) D.S. Robinson, The God of the Liberal Christian, p.55ff.

3) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.229ff.



VIEW OF SCRIPTURE: In reviewing the interpretation of Modernism with that of Scripture on Christ's death, we find in the former a mixture of truths, half-truths, and errors. Facts mentioned may be truths in themselves, and yet errors because of their context. Christ's death is a pattern and example for His followers, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup" (Matt. 20, 23), and a demonstration of Sin and Love, but that was not its highest purpose. This we know from the fact that those purposes are not stated, but are only deductions and by-products, while the real purpose is stated in Scripture: "And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6, 51); "Who gave Himself for us, that (hina) He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Tit. 2, 14); "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5, 10). Thus the Modernist position is at fault in that it presents Christ's death in the wrong light, that it had an effect, not upon God, but only upon man. Machen correctly puts it: "They err in that they ignore the dreadful reality of guilt, and make a mere persuasion of the human will all that is needed for salvation. They do indeed contain an element of truth... But they are swallowed up in a far greater truth--that Christ died instead of us to present us faultless before the throne of God". 1)

The essence of Modernism lies hidden in their moral influence theory of the atonement, and in presenting Christ's death as a pattern, it takes for conclusion the ability to imitate that pattern. This is then salvation, not by Christ's atonement, but by example, and salvation by character. This, as mentioned before, shifts the cause of salvation entirely on man, and excludes Christ. And yet, if Christ's death was that of the holiest and best, how does it show, of itself, God's love? If Christ's death is the result of His life, what incentive, even, has man for a holy life to experience such a death? Virtue is

1) G.G. Machen, Christianity and Liberalism, p. 119.



then scarcely its own reward. Rauschenbusch, in explaining how sins to-day were carried by Christ, uses the very idea of imputation which he rejects as post-biblical. His conclusions of organized evil, as being the cause of Christ's death, besides being fanciful, merely place an intermediate stage between our sins and those which caused Christ's death. Thus the interpretation of Modernism is hardly justified on grounds of reason, much less of Scripture.

**CONCERNING THE VICARIOUS ELEMENT IN CHRIST'S DEATH:** Modernism has adopted a special attitude toward this feature.

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** When Modernists emphasize the vicarious feature of Christ's death, they present Modernism in its highest and subtlest form. But it is presented in a special light, namely as a pattern for us to imitate. Thus W. Hyde says: "Vicarious suffering is not an arbitrary contrivance by which Christ brought a formal pardon for the world. It is a universal law, of which the cross of Christ is an eternal symbol."<sup>1</sup>) D. Robinson says that the vicarious sacrifice contains a kernel of truth, being of deep and vital significance in human experience, therefore "Jesus has supplied an object of loyalty for the noblest devotions of the generations since he came."<sup>2</sup>) E. Chapman, in emphasizing the reality and importance of the vicarious element in life, adds: "Jesus Christ has been and is the great exemplar of this truth".<sup>3</sup>) And H. Fosdick, in a section with the sub-title: The historic Jesus has given its most appealing and effective exhibition of vicarious sacrifice, explains it as a part of the essential nature of the moral world and supremely exhibited in Christ, so that it thus becomes to many "a challenge to sacrificial living of their own".<sup>4</sup>) Thus does Modernism teach vicarious sacrifice.

**VIEW OF SCRIPTURE:** In teaching a vicarious element in Christ's

1) W. DeWitt Hyde, Outlines of the Social Gospel, p.228.  
2) D.S. Robinson, The God of the Liberal Christian, p.55.  
3) E.M. Chapman, A Modernist and His Creed, p.107.  
4) H.E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.231.



-27-

death, Modernism has recognized its nature, but has erred in its manner of presenting it for use. Christ's death does call forth sacrificial living in His followers, but that is not its prime purpose, it was not a mere object lesson, but a work which was absolutely essential for man's salvation. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree", (Gal. 3, 13); "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son", (Rom. 5, 10); "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered", (Mark 14, 27). Thus Christ's death has primarily an effect upon God, and not only upon man.

#### CONCERNING THE SPECIFIC WORK OF JESUS CHRIST:

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** Various interpretations have been given to the life-work of Christ, but several have more general acceptance than others. The favorite summary of Christ's work presents Him as the greatest Revealer of God to man. The error consists in making this the chief mission of Jesus Christ. S. Mathews says: "I believe in Jesus Christ, who by his teaching, life, death, and resurrection, revealed God as Savior".<sup>1)</sup> W. Gladden says: "It is by revealing to us the character of God that his atoning work is done. This is the atonement, it is the revelation of God to man".<sup>2)</sup> Jesus reveals God here by showing how God hates sin, thus making us hate sin as God hates sin. J. Clarke says: "His work was to bring men to God and to make them one".<sup>3)</sup> Again he says: "Whenever the mediator does his work effectually, he then disappears and ceases to be seen at all", (p. 295). He therefore says: "When I feel the presence of God, I do not need Christ, as a mediator", (p. 297). E. Chapman explains that salvation was determined by man's idea of God, therefore Jesus developed the

1) S. Mathews, The Faith of Modernism, p. 180.

2) W. Gladden, Present-Day Theology, 2nd Edition, p. 165.

3) J. F. Clarke, Common-Sense in Religion, 18th Impression, p. 294.



idea that man was meant for God and God wanted to help man.!) Fosdick presents Christ's work as correcting man's false impressions of God and revealing the right impressions.<sup>2)</sup>

But Modernism also present other explanations of Christ's work. Thus E. Chapman explains the main object of Christ's ministry to be a training of disciples to continue His work, (p.90). H. Vedder explains that salvation which Jesus came to give man was in helping them to become good, to become like their Father in heaven. "It is not attainment of formal 'justification', but impartation of new character, the power of an endless life".<sup>3)</sup> W. Hyde says that Jesus' mission was to work with God in the world,<sup>4)</sup> Fosdick finally presents Christ as the ethical teacher when he says: "Have done with your theological Christ and give us back Jesus the ethical teacher".<sup>5)</sup>

**VIA OF SCRIPTURE:** Jesus Christ in Scripture is presented as the greatest Revealer of God to man, as training His disciples, helping man, and issuing moral principles, but Modernism does not present this work in the same light as the Bible. Modernism presents these features as the direct and only way of salvation, while Scripture presents Christ's life and death as a vicarious work for man, that whoever accepts it in that light is saved. Eph. 5, 2: "Christ also loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." John 6, 51: "And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". Rom. 3, 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood".

It is the characteristic of Modernism to pick up side-lights of Christ's work and present them in spectacular manner as His life's mission, without substantiating their claim from the Scripture which

- 1) E. M. Chapman, A Modernist and His Creed, p. 214.
- 2) H. E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p. 225.
- 3) H. C. Vedder, The Gospel of Jesus, p. 13.
- 4) W. DeWitt Hyde, Outlines of the Social Gospel, p. 50ff.
- 5) H. E. Fosdick, *idem*, p. 240.



they use as a starting-point. Salvation does not consist in knowing the character of God, but in believing Christ as the Savior. John 6, 40: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have everlasting life". In rejecting Christ as Mediator, we meet plain rationalism, and flat denial of divine revelation, which says, 1 Tim. 2, 5: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus". The only way to salvation is the unreasonable way of simple trust in Christ as the only Deliverer. John 3, 16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

#### THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO HIS TEACHINGS:

**VIEWS OF MODERNISM:** Modernists have adopted several views as pre-eminent in interpreting the sayings of Jesus. The most prominent, however, is in harmony with the historical viewpoint which Modernism adopted in reference to Christ, namely they look upon Him merely as a product of His age. Whatever He said or did is weakened, by the attitude that its meaning could fit only for that time, and not to-day. Thus W. Forrest explains: "He" (Christ) "reflected the ideas of his hearers and his age, Manifestly he knew nothing of the Bible perfect in all its parts. Beyond reasonable question, he laid upon his followers the obligation of rejecting everything in Scripture that was out of harmony with reason and conscience".<sup>1)</sup> Thus Christ's sayings are regulated by reason, He dared not speak above reason. R. Sellars declares emphatically: "Were the views of Jesus like those of his age? Nothing has come out more clearly than just this fact". "He was a child of his age, although a notably sincere and high-minded one... What part accident played in giving him confidence cannot be known, but it was probably large".<sup>2)</sup>

1) W. Forrest, Do Fundamentalists Play Fair? p. 57-58.

2) R. Sellars, The Next Step in Religion, p. 76. 80.



It has been particularly H. Fosdick's effort to present Christ's mission as that of an ethical teacher. He sums up Christ's ethical efforts thus: "He has given us in timeless terms expressed in universally applicable life a form of conduct, a quality of spirit, which changing circumstances do not effect".<sup>1)</sup> This may seem contradictory to the former position, but here Modernism seeks to secure Christ's method and principle rather than the meaning of His verbal utterances. Therefore "the spirit and character of Jesus are the answer" in understanding His teachings. Again he says: "His ethical principles leave us many a puzzling problem in this very unideal world, but they have done us more service than any prudential maxims ever could have done", (p.228). Thus on divine forgiveness, "This message Jesus did not originate, but he clarified it, and proclaimed it with a singleness of interest, a unity of purpose, a beauty of spirit, which has made him its unique expositor... He has given the world its loftiest ethical ideals", (p.226). This was the mission of Christ for the Modernism.

Other views entertained agree with the modernistic conception of Christ. His mission as an example to man is given by Robinson: "Another principle of Jesus' philosophy of life is this settled belief that the supreme duty of man is to be a laborer with God in the great task of changing natural man into saints."<sup>2)</sup> The Gospel message which Jesus taught, according to H. Vedder, is: "This is the very heart of the Gospel, as Jesus expressed it in his twin precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart', and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'".<sup>3)</sup> Rauschenbusch interprets Christ's teachings in a social manner: "Jesus was neither ascetic nor other-worldly... He believed in a life after death, but it was not the dominant element in his teaching, nor the constraining force in his religious life".<sup>4)</sup> Thus the ascetic sayings of Jesus were merely the

1) H. E. Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, p.240.

2) D. Robinson, The God of the Liberal Christian, p.143.

3) H. C. Vedder, The Gospel of Jesus, p.18.

4) W. Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p.157.



equipment of His age and religion.

**VIEW OF SCRIPTURE:** In the case of either Modernism or biblical Christianity, the teachings of Jesus are explained in agreement with His works. The only value which most Modernists find in those teachings is the method by which Jesus worked. This affords them the opportunity, then, to explain His messages according to their preconceived notions, rejecting the plain meaning of Christ's statements as products of His time. Christ's messages, then, are only relatively true. When He says: "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6, 47), if this is only relatively true, then was not such a Christ practicing deception? But if Jesus spoke eternal truth, then His sayings are as true to-day as then. But in reviewing Christ's utterances, we obtain the impression that it was because He did not reflect the spirit of His age that He came in conflict with His contemporaries. How often did He not correct their idea of a temporal kingdom? How He exposed the leading religious thinkers of His age, the scribes and Pharisees? In fact, what did He have in common with His age? His message was from above, John 8, 23: "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world". Even Fosdick does not understand Christ as the product of His age.

The teachings of Christ are the essence of His work, the redemption of the world in accordance with the will of God. This message is primary in all His conversation, as even bulk will show, in comparison with what is recorded of Him. John 8, 36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

#### **CONCLUSION:**

**APPLICATION OF CHRISTOLOGY:** According to Modernism the man who makes use of its views is entirely different from the man whom biblical Christianity tries to reach. Modernism regards the natural man as only part and parcel of God, wherein man and nature are the



expression of the Eternal Spirit, and man simply needs to be made conscious of his kinship to God and his destiny to become one in purpose with God. Salvation consists, then, in making him conscious of his unknown relationship, making Christology which Modernism professes with this in view, to reveal Christ as a man, in order that every mortal may also fill Christ's part and act like Him. Salvation then consists in a man adopting the methods of Christ, his equal brother. Biblical Christianity deals not with god-like men, but with fallen and helpless man, and offers to him the God-man Christ as his Savior.

**BASIS:** Biblical Christianity rests on the Scripture and that only. Modernism rests on reason and endeavors to justify itself with the Scripture. The result has been that Modernism straddles the issue, it is divided against itself: (Shailer Mathews against the Social Gospel), and harbors inconsistencies. As a climax, it is not only resisted by biblical Christianity, but also benevolently attacked by Rationalism, for its inconsistency.

**THE FUTURE:** If following the trend of Modernism during the past decade is an indication of its tendencies in the future, it must be said that Modernism is then heading for the camp of Rationalism, leaving the basis of Scripture more and more, and relying almost totally upon reason as the judge. It can well join hands with theism and Utilitarianism. Its present danger consists in its drapery of Christian terminology, for which we must repeat Paul's advice: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away" (2Tim. 3, 5).

Finis.

Approved 5/30/30.  
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