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Who and What.

Very frequently it has been said to us that it matters little who our Lord Jesus Christ was but rather what He was. Indeed, it has been said that it matters not whether He really was at all as He is commonly believed to have been. We have his teaching, it is said we can look at a recorded example. Let us embody the one, let us seek to follow the other, and prebide both with the beneficent spirit that attended him like a benediction. Never mind who but consider well what. Just now, however, a book has been published in which it is said not what but who. "The ever-pressing question," Dr. S. D. McConnell says in his book called "Christ," "is not 'what is this Jesus which is called Christ' but who is He? What is he for? What does He signify to the world?" It is here that confusion reigns.

We suppose that Dr. McConnell is right in saying there is confusion here. There was at the first when Jesus asked His disciples, "who do men say that I the son of man am?" There has been ever since. Some have made him mere man and so have denuded him of his power. Others, whether they have intended it or not, have so removed Him from the plane of humanity that they have severed the bond of sympathy binding Him to the race. There has been confusion; there is confusion here, and so to a greater or less degree spiritual disaster. But Dr. McConnell, is hardly equally right in saying the pressing question is not, "What is this Jesus?" This is a pressing question. Is our Lord what the Christian heart believes Him to be? Is He saviour, sanctifier, comforter? Is He the restorer of my spiritual life? Is he a help when human help fails? Is He hope from which radiates brightness for the future where all else is dark?

As a matter of fact we cannot separate the who from the what in the person of our Lord. What He is depends on who He is. The latter may have precedence but the former is ever close at hand and dwindles or enlarges as it is conceived aright. If our Lord is simply man, then farewell the redemption of which we have dreamed. If He was the son of Joseph as He was the son of Mary, then the supernatural vanishes from His life and personally He is no more to the world than Confucius or Buddha. If somehow He was not the son of God come into life for its regeneration then never was mirage more unsubstantial than the fabric of hope built up on Him. What He is then rests upon who He is and is subordinate to it only as that comes first in the order of precedence. By inseparable bonds they are bound together twin elements of basis and inspiration in the Christian faith.

The Supernatural Factor.

For a long time the most discriminating thinkers have clearly recognized that the fundamental issue between those who uphold the Christian revelation and those who refuse to accept it as an authoritative message of God to men is involved in the question whether or not there is a supernatural factor in Christianity. If the Christian religion can be thoroughly co-ordinated with a purely materialistic philosophy then the historical Christian faith will be emptied of that which has constituted its peculiar significance and power.

This is not because the supernatural factor in Christianity is the sole evidence of its divine origin, though many apologists consider it to be such. But the supernatural element is so woven into the structure of the Christian revelation that the fact of its existence underlies all the distinctive doctrines of the faith. The supernatural factor is itself the outstanding Christian doctrine. And we may say this without being in the least

fear of countenancing the exaggerated supernaturalism that finds a miracle the explanation of all difficulties or that seeks to inculcate a theory of the Bible that the book itself does not make in its own behalf.

Take for example, such cardinal Christian doctrines as the nature of Christ. If we could explain the person of Jesus as the product of evolution or of historic forces, what right have we to assume that He is the last term in the series, or that there is any element of fidelity in His teachings of His work? The answer that we cannot conceive of anything beyond Jesus is simply an evasion. Our faculty of imagining is the most superficial test of reality. But the moment we explain Jesus with the author of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel we occupy absolutely impregnable ground for maintaining the authority of His words and the success of His mission. "What difference does it make whether or not Jesus was a supernatural person?" asks some thoughtless objector. "Whoever He was, we have Him." Yes, we have Him, but if He is the Second Person of the Trinity then our whole relation to Him is shifted from our relation to a man of spiritual insight and genius to our relation to "God manifest in the flesh." The supernatural factor manifested in the incarnation lifts Jesus into the realm of the ultimate.

The most influential attacks upon Christianity and the Bible for the last half century have never yet really grappled with the question of the supernatural. They have adopted the easier method of assuming that any statement of events or any doctrine involving this feature was intrinsically incredible. That has been the assumption from the days of Strauss to the last volume of destructive criticism. What has been done by this long debate has been simply to show that in Christianity, divested of the supernatural, we have a religion that does not appeal to the deepest motives or meet the deepest needs of the human hearts. A religion that it may be well enough to live by, but it is not worth sacrificing greatly much less dying for. The denial of the supernatural gives us a faith that cannot in any sense be called ultimate. Religious discussion will soon revert to the correctness of the assumption that the supernatural is incredible. "That," someone will say, "is a conflict in which only scholars can take part. It will be a battle in the clouds." We do not fully accede to that statement. But, if it were true, we recall that a battle in the clouds at Missionary Ridge worked one of the crises in the redemption of the continent.

Some Satisfying Reasons

By Washington Gladden, D. D.

When you ask me what makes me believe that for me and for those whose lives are one with mine there is conscious life beyond the grave, I must answer that the reasons are manifold. It is, of course, a glorious hope, a confidence, a strong expectation; it can be nothing more. I have had no personal revelation about it, and should not know how to verify such a revelation if it were vouchsafed me. There is no demonstration of which I know anything.

With respect to the existence and the friendship of God, I believe that I may have something more than faith—experimental knowledge. When, through years of service, I have tested his fidelity; when I have habitually sought from Him wisdom, comfort, courage, patience, strength and have found what I sought, I may naturally feel that my faith in Him amounts to knowledge

—"I know of whom I have believed." But this assurance of future life cannot thus enter into my consciousness. I cannot experience it until I enter into it. It is confidence; it cannot be cognition.

My faith in the future is strengthened by the knowledge that it is not a solitary faith; that the most of my fellowmen share it with me. It seems to be part of that natural religiousness which belongs to humanity. And John Fiske's contention abides with me, that nature—if you choose to say nature—could not have developed such an organ of faith as this unless there had been a reality corresponding to it; any more than she could have developed an eye where there was no light, or an ear where there were no waves of sound. I cannot help feeling that all the larger interpretations of evolution make the future life probable.

More and more, however, I find myself resting on the sure word of Jesus the Christ. It seems to me that he is an authority in the realm of the Spirit. "Wherever I can verify His word I find it true." His might never fails; I have never found the slightest reason for believing Him to be mistaken in any clear pronouncement about spiritual things. And when He speaks with the utmost positiveness of the certainty of the life to come, I take His word with no misgiving.

Moreover, the assurance of the life to come seems to be a part of that faith in God's Fatherhood, which I have learned from Jesus Christ and which has become the very breath of life to me. I cannot understand how the existence of such a personal relation between myself and my Father in heaven as Jesus has taught me to cherish, can be consistent with the extinction of my being at death.

Stronger than all else, however, is the assurance that comes to me through living, in this world, the immortal life. There is a kind of life, which Jesus shows me, and of which the Spirit tells me, that ought to be immortal. "The glory of going on" belongs to it. If it did not continue, something would be wrong with the universe. When I live, as best I can, this kind of life, making the Spirit who was in Jesus my companion and counsellor, my hold upon the future seems constantly to strengthen. Then I can understand what Paul meant when he said: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Columbus, O.

Personals.

Rev. E. L. Steeves, of Glace Bay, who is removing to the church in Sackville, was given by his old congregation before his departure an address and a substantial purse of money.

At the close of the service on Sunday morning, June 5th, in the Amherst church, the church by vote decided to extend a call to Rev. Suden Cummings to succeed Rev. W. E. Bates, who recently resigned the pastorate of that church.