

No. 30. This article declared that it cannot be exactly determined who and what Jesus really was, as His disciples had nothing but "impressions" (Eindrücke) of the person of Christ, which were strongly tinged with carnal Messianic notions, and after His death here and there received also a Jewish Apocalyptic coloring. "In the gospels and in the epistles of the New Testament these impressions are retained. We who are living in this age have these representations. We have only the echo (Widerhall), but we have not the words of Christ. We have only a mirror (Spiegel) of His being, reflected out of the souls of others." Over against the Apostles, who were acquainted with Christ personally, the impressions of Christ are now mediately brought to his people. In accordance with the laws of psychology, such impressions are made upon us with the assistance of the imagination (Phantasie). The pictures which are created in us by the narration of the Life of Christ with the assistance of the imagination form themselves into a general scheme of a total picture of Christ. This imaginative picture (Phantasiebild) through the continuance and close contemplation of Christ arouses us to love, reverence, enthusiasm, and determination to follow in His footsteps." In this way we have a so-called "ideal" or "imaginative" communion with Christ. Without such impressions there can be no impression of the historical representations. The historical Christ, who has been handed down to us, is a phantasy picture, and can affect us only as such, and only to this image can we come into any relation, because the terrestrial and visible Christ is no longer before us. In so far as Christ has throughout the ages made such "impressions" and still makes them, He is a "living" Christ.

The Ritschl system, which is the new theology of Germany, and is constantly gaining adherents both there and elsewhere, is characterized by a fundamental departure from the landmarks of evangelical Christianity, including the denial of the greatest facts of the Christian system of doctrine. That these are cast aside is not denied; but the claim is put forth that the acceptance of the preexistence and eternal Sonship of God, of the divinity and virgin birth of Christ, of the Trinity, of the inspiration of the Scriptures and other essentials, as historical facts (Thatsachen) is unnecessary for the production of Christian faith; and that the acceptance of the one great "fact," namely, "the historical Christ," His overwhelming and overpowering personality, is all that is needed. An adherent of this school recently ventured the characteristic statement that "the Church has now learned to walk without the crutches of the Scriptures." The Ritschl school thus aims at a radical reconstruction of the idea, origin, and character of Christian faith, divorcing it from the great historical facts underlying the Gospel history in the life and work of Christ and His disciples, and transferring this faith accordingly from the basis of the written Word to that of subjective and personal con-