

Christian theology, even in its most logical and scientific form, must be the revelation of God in Christ, though this has not been the method generally adopted hitherto. But whatever may be true regarding theology as a scientific discipline, there is no doubt of its being true of it as a practical art for the salvation of men. The first great business of the minister is to preach Christ, to bring him near to men and make them feel the kind of personage he was, that they may know him, learn to love him and trust him. In some quarters there is a sort of feeling that Christianity is only a kind of advanced stage of natural religion or of Judaism, and that it can have no firm standing until the foundation has been laid by making good the truth of one or both of these. Now no doubt there is a certain sense in which that is true. Christianity has many points of contact with both natural religion and Judaism. Both may be said to lead up to Christianity. Natural religion or the philosophy of theism, which is usually identified with it, leads up to Christianity logically, and Judaism did so historically. But, as a matter of fact, neither the philosophical theists nor the Jews have been among the readiest to accept Christianity and little is gained by appealing to either the one or the other as such. Christianity makes its appeal on its own grounds and puts Christ himself in the forefront. It is true there are certain

presuppositions which it takes for granted—some of them of the greatest importance, such as, the existence of God, the future life or the immortality of the soul, the reality and permanence of moral distinctions, and the sinfulness of mankind. But it treats these largely as data of conscience and does not attempt to prove them. Its message is for those who already feel these to be true and are alarmed at the consequences which they see must follow. As Christ himself put it, he came not to call the righteous but sinners. For such the primary gospel is the Christ.

This is the significance of the fact that the New Testament opens with the four gospels, giving us a full picture of the character, doings, and sayings of the Christ. These are the artless records of the Apostles' preaching; and it is clear that it was the telling of this story which won for Christianity its earliest adherents and gained its earliest triumphs.

We can readily see why. In that story as they told it, there was undoubtedly something to repel; for they could not conceal his lowly origin, his humble rank in life, his political insignificance, the absence of outward pomp, his apparent failure to win a hearing from his own generation, his ignominious death by crucifixion. And not a few were repelled by these things. But on the other hand there was much to attract and win.