

WHO IS CHRIST?

Delta in Lutheran Observer.

There are those who affect to answer the question, "Who is Christ?" by saying he was a mere pretender who advanced great claims he could never meet. But where, pray, did Christ make an assumption He could not or did not fulfill? He claimed the power to forgive sin and at once proceeded to substantiate the same by working a miracle. If Christ's claims were unprecedented, so also were the works by which he made them good. What pretender in any cause ever walked on the sea? What mere pretender ever fed 5,000 people with a few loaves and fishes? What pretender ever called back the dead to life, as did Jesus in at least three distinct instances?

As a pretender, Christ must have been either conscious or unconscious of the fact. (Brown.) If the former, then He was so anxious to practice deception on the world, that He was willing to expose Himself to the risk of being detected in the fraud of such numerous and palpable miracles that the world has not seen their like before or since. He was also so eager to deceive that He did not hesitate to lay down His life in support of His pretensions! But you readily admit the utter absurdity of all that.

Think of Christ's utterances, so rational, intelligible and authoritative. Consider the effect of His teachings on the ages since, not merely on the ignorant, but on the educated and the refined especially and that above every other religion Christianity has fostered learning, and the more intelligent nations today are those that have embraced and been developed by Christianity, and we are at no loss whatever as to how to dispose of the alleged irrationality of the founder Himself.

It is said Christ was a great moralist, deserving to rank as an ethical teacher with the Greek Socrates, or the Roman Seneca. It cannot be denied that these men, heathen though they were, taught sublimely, and beautifully, and with a wisdom almost inspired. Their lives also were better than those of the people about them yet they cannot for a moment be soberly compared with Christ who repeatedly challenged his enemies to point out a single flaw in his character, and they could not. Jesus LIVED HIS DOCTRINE fully and perfectly—a thing which cannot be said of any other being that ever trod the earth.

But while it is idle to try to find any other teacher perfectly exemplifying in his life the principles he enunciated, Christ goes far beyond all others in the extent, perfection and harmony with which he presented the truth. Heathen philosophers confined themselves exclusively to maxims regulating the present life, and the great future was a mere surmise. The chief glory of Christ's teaching is that it starts with the future and views the change of time in the light thus reflected from the eternal world. Who but Christ offers us any escape from the torments of a guilty conscience? What explanation is offered of death and what lies beyond the confines of the grave? A sad silence or an uncertain conjecture is all we can get out of worldly philosophy or themes the most momentous to the soul's ideal. It remains for Christ's hand to draw aside the curtain and allow heaven and hell to stand visible. But Christ does even more than reveal to men their duties, their sins and their ultimate destiny. Through Him comes the Holy Spirit, God operative in human life. Thus Christ alone of all teachers earth has ever known, confers a power unknown to mere mortality, which enables man to perform duty, shun sin and attain at last a condition of everlasting blessedness in heaven.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Central Presbyterian:—The worth and dignity of life consist in being new creatures in Christ Jesus. The simple trust that unites us to him brings to us all the buoyancy of life, makes all things possible to us. The consciousness that He has a plan for my life—that He will make known this plan and give the strength to carry it out, takes all the insipidity out of life; gives to it all satisfaction and dignity.

Presbyterian Witness:—Let us do our little share to bring our Master more fully and trustfully before those who have not yet heard Him. Personally, and privately, if you will have the best results, begin by offering your personal service in some way that stands open to you. He has need of faithful witnesses in every street of every city; and equally He has need of you in your quiet hamlet where He delights in the genuine loyalty of every heart, old and young.

United Presbyterian:—We wrong ourselves when we imagine that the world is all against us. Our suspicion is our worst enemy when we think that society has formed a confederacy to put us down. The world has cliques enough but we are scarcely sufficient importance in it to justify another. Keep sweet and the world will reciprocate. The ready smile, the warm hand grasp, gentleness of temper and ordinary merit will reach shore where the cold hart and the somber countenance will go to the bottom.

Lutheran Observer:—It is true that men are pardoned on the ground of the atonement and righteousness of Christ. But, then, as pardoned, the design of salvation by grace is to bring them into the righteousness and excellence of character which their new and gracious relation demands. And the morality of the Bible, its demands for character and life, are marked by a correctness, a completeness, an elevation which the best thought of man has not otherwise compassed. In such passages as the Sermon on the Mount and the twelfth chapter of Romans we have a portraiture of the ethical life to which we are called in the gospel. In the sinless Christ himself we have an image of the righteousness of character into which Christianity is to bring sinful man.

A short time ago a very urgent appeal was made to Governor Hughes of New York, by representatives of the State Federation of Labor, the Theatrical Carpenters' Union and the Actors' Church Alliance of New York City to take the necessary steps to prevent the continuance of the so-called "sacred concerts" given on Sunday in the theatres of New York. Very justly it was contended that the opening of the theatres on Sunday results in the oppression of the employees, who work long hours on week days and should not be compelled to work seven days in the week when the Sunday work involves a plain violation of the law. The Sabbath is the bulwark of a nation's health, morals and prosperity, and whatever tends to weaken its proper observance should be withstood in the interest of good citizenship, as well as of religion. This is a point which never should be lost sight of by the people.

Charity of speech is as divine a thing as charity of action. To judge no one harshly, to misconceive no man's motives, to believe things as they seem to be until proved otherwise, to temper judgment with mercy—surely this is quite as good as to build up churches, under the most glorious of all leaders,

Feeling is a sort of thought without the process of thinking—a grasper of the truth without seeing it. And what is very remarkable, Feeling seldom makes the blunders that Thought does. —J. R. Miller.

BEAUTY AND UTILITY OF GRATITUDE.*

By Robert E. Speer.

Nothing is more characteristic of Christianity than thankfulness to God. The early church was filled with it. The first of the epistles of the New Testament sets it forth as one of the great Christian duties. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to youward." The prayers of the church were full of gratitude. When they asked for things, it was with loving appreciation of what God had already done for them. "In everything," Paul counselled them, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." No small part of the joy and strength of the early church was due to this habit of gratitude.

It was gratitude and not resignation. The early Christians did not passively submit to the will of God. They positively rejoiced in it. And they did not qualify and explain away what was the will of God. They thanked God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name. They rejoiced in tribulation. They were glad when they were allowed to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and so to fill up their measure to the redeeming of the world. All that came to them they thanked God for, and were glad that it was not otherwise.

There is a wonderful uplifting power in this attitude. Whoever looks on life in this way is lifted above its vicissitudes and anxieties. He thanks God for everything. Nothing can come to him for which he will not thank God and be glad. Such a habit of soul cleanses us from fret and turmoil of heart and gives us our own place of peace.

And it opens to us a living way to God. "Whosoever offereth praise," says God by the mouth of the Psalmist, "glorifieth me and openeth a way whereby I may manifest myself unto him." The spirit of thankfulness is a spirit to which God has access. It is the spirit which confesses its own insufficiency and its willingness to accept from God and to which God therefore makes reply. In the humble and the thankful heart he loves to dwell.

We should seek at once to acquire the habit of thankfulness. Every hour of every day we should be thanking God for what comes to us. "I thank thee, Father," should be our word as it was Christ's. For all that came to him he blessed God. We, too, should bless him at all times. His praise should ever be in our mouths. We do not need to do it publicly. We can cheapen our gratitude by filling our conversation with "Praise God," "Praise the Lord," but we cannot too often thank God in our hearts.

Gratitude to God for his love takes the sting out of all that is hateful in the world. We can still and all the more earnestly contend against all that is evil and unworthy, but our hearts will be at rest in the goodness of God. His love and our grateful acknowledgment of his love will heal all that has been hurt and make it well again.

"Let us with a grateful mind
Praise the Lord for he is kind,
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—Thanksgiving is good (Psa. 92: 1-15).

Tues.—In public worship (Psa. 35: 17-19).

Wed.—In everything (1 Thess. 5: 11-18.)

Thurs.—For Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 9: 10-15.)

Fri.—For national blessings (Psa. 136: 1-26.)

Sat.—For bodily good (1 Tim. 4: 1-14.)

*Topic T.P.S., for Sunday, December 1, 1907. The Beauty and utility of gratitude (Psa. 111: 1-10. A thanksgiving consecration meeting.)