

of Jesus, the Christ. A man of thirty years, He begins His public ministry among men. Back to the ages past of prophecy He turns, as He says, "I am He of whom Moses and the prophets spake."

The marks of the forecast are there. The tribe of David, the little town of Bethlehem, the sweet-faced Virgin Mother, of whose ineffable bliss the ages since have sung, the surnamed Nazareth, all there in perfect fulfillment. Ingenious pretence, do you say, with modern skepticism? Easily arranged to further the claim of Divinity. Let it pass then, though the clear ingeniousness, the thorough naturalness of this story is its highest claim to truth. Come and look with me at this matchless character that stands uplifted upon the pedestal of earth's adoration as it presents the out lines of the ideal humanity.

Waters rise not higher than their source. He came in an age whose character was the opposite of idealty. On the one side Judaism, decayed from all its ancient purity; festering with worldliness and formalism, a whitened sepulchre, filled within with the loathsomeness of hypocrisy and sham;—on the other imperial Rome, sensual, debauched, polluted,—an age whose legitimate fruitage was Herod, the fox, and Nero, man of blood and mud, corrupt and devilish both. There came and flashed upon the earth the splendor of a perfect man; He came and humanity took Him and crucified Him. Whence came that character that has set the outlines of all possible virtue? Whence grew that ideal of manhood, that miracle of goodness, that example of disinterested benevolence? Shall we answer, from the purpose of a pure spirit and man, who would be a reformer, a benefactor among men. I answer again with the question, why, then, does it develop only here? Why is there only one in all earth's centuries to whom men can look and gain an inspiration to seek the holy things of God? Other teachers have taught virtue. Socrates and Plato, Zeno and the Stoics, the good and wise in all ages had striven to cleanse human life of sin and develop the clean hand and the pure heart. Why and how, alone of them all and alone of all men since did he of the carpenter shop of Nazareth attain this unique splendor of life and example? And again, whence came such an idea as His life presents? Why had no man of all the great and good ever devised before such a scheme for the good of men? Who invented Jesus Christ? Ah! the words are true, "It took a Christ to plan a Christ." The very conception of His character is out of the bounds of human possibility. That He was good, that is history; that He was God, that is His own claim. Put the two together. Either He was God or He was not good. Either He was the son of the Highest or He was deceiving or self-deceived; either the greatest fraud or the greatest fool of the ages. There is no standing room for the hypothesis of modern doubt. Napoleon said, "I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man."

They who, in denial of His Divinity,

make Him but earth's greatest teacher, in the adulation of their praise make impossible their theories.

It is Strauss who writes. "He remains the highest ideal within the reach of our thought, and no perfect deity is possible without His presence in the heart."

And it is Rousseau, skeptical, satirical, scoffing Rousseau, who said: "Where else is the man, where the philosopher who could live and die thus without weakness and ostentation? If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

Either He was God or He was not good; and with His life the one perfect figure of time, raised by its immaculate goodness to where it shines the

"White flower of a blameless life." We bow before it in rapt adoration, as we confess of Christianity's Christ, "Thou art the Son of the Living God"

III. Finally, I find the last Challenge of Faith in the Historic Church of Christ.

The continuation of the Incarnation; the final culmination of prophecy, the organic body, indwelt by the Spirit of God. With the death of Jesus, the hopes of his followers died. They had dreamed of an earthly dominion; they had hoped for the breaking of the Rome yoke and the emancipation of Israel. They had seen Him seized, tried, condemned, mocked, scourged and crucified. They had gazed upon His agony, they had heard His expiring groans, they had laid him in the sepulchre, and with Him had buried their hearts. And they went their way, dispirited, discouraged, desolate. "We had hoped," said they, "that this had been He who had delivered Israel."

Three days and these same men, jealous, filled with zeal, daring rage, threatenings, death itself, are loudly preaching the Gospel of the Son of God. Note this as I pass. Nothing but the veritable resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot account for the metamorphosis in these men. No hope, no incentive, could have brought them to preach what they did, unless they knew it to be true! The existence of the Church today in the most unanswerable argument for the resurrection.

Forty days He remains with them, teaching them the things pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven. Then He is taken from them. Above them He hovers in the clear Judean sky, as He speaks the great commission of the Church and gives them the promise of the everlasting presence. Ten days, and the twelve completed, the mystical number of completeness and universality, on them falls the power of the Holy Ghost, and the Church begins her time-long life. In Jerusalem first, then with that wide Catholicity of which none but He had ever dreamed; the Church of Christ proclaimed the Gospel of her ascended Lord. Plato and Socrates taught for Greece but their philosophy languished when it crossed the blue Aegean sea; the great philosophers of Rome could not follow her eagles over the world with the thought and tendencies of sunny

Italy. But here was a philosophy that knew no bounds or clime. Against it burst the rage of the Jew, and the fanatical persecution of the Roman.

"Near to Christ, near to the sword," was the world's greeting to the Christian. All over the world the blood of the martyr was the seed of the Church. Never, in all the history of time, did such persecution fall of complete extermination. But with avitalty that was perennial with a courage that was indomitable, following "no cunningly devised fable." They "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Rome crumbled and fell. Down from the north rushed the savage hordes, whose idol was a keen sword, the point uplifted. The Gospel turned the point into the sheath, and made of the uplifted hilt the saving symbol of the Cross of Christ.

The dark ages gathered. In the abbeyes and monasteries the light of learning still burned and came out at last to enlighten the world. Step by step, age by age, has this Gospel come, living in spite of human ignorance, enduring, though burdened with human folly, vital, though rent by human schism; misrepresented, distorted, abased, yet ever awaiting the time

"When the great Church Victorious, Shall be the Church of rest."

Ask me for her achievements, and I point you to all that is best in human life, ask me for her work, and I point you to the advancing justice, righteousness, and literally through the world; ask me for Christianity's proof, and I point you to Christianity's world, the best and highest century in the annals of time.

My theme has reached its close, and I turn to close these all too feeble words. Before the matchless majesty of the Gospel all words of earth pale into insignificance. I have spoken them that I might, perchance, turn your thoughts anew to the comprehensions of that which is the highest of all human concepts, the sum of all wisdom. Virgil, you remember, sang in one of his loftiest strains, in his fourth eclogue, the birth of a child who was to restore the golden age. The boy of whom he sang was imprisoned by Tiberius and starved to death in a dungeon under the Tiber. But the Child whom the prophet's song has brought humanity to His feast, and rules the world by the glory of His Cross.

I would have you learn the mighty power of that Gospel. I would have you be true to the pure and simple philosophy of the Nazarene. I would have you seek all knowledge; advance in all attainment; master the world and gain all golden success, but above all, and through all, I would have you ever see, set in the clear blue sky of God's bright Heaven above you, that gleaming Cross, and about it in letters of light, God's message to uplooking humanity, "In This Sign Thou Shalt Conquer."

The Ladies' Guild of Christ Church, Winnipeg, are ready to undertake to make cassocks or surplices for chorists or choirs. Terms on application to Christ Church Rectory, Winnipeg.