

Christian doctrine, is far more prominent in religious literature, and in preaching, than formerly. The skeleton of doctrine is clothed with flesh, encases a pulsing heart, and moves among men in the person of the Founder of Christianity, to whom has come, in modern days, as it were, a second resurrection. Doctrinal dissertations, dry and hard as the bony structures wired and hung up in a college of surgery, formed the staple of theological publications, and of sermons, not very long since. Now, their place is largely and better occupied with the teaching and preaching of Christ. Human proneness to extremes manifests itself here, however. "Away with doctrine," exclaim some, "and give us Christ." It is contended by not a few, that systematic theology is a needless, if not impertinent, thing, the chief argument for this crude view being, that Christ did not teach a systematized body of truth. But it is not necessary to banish doctrine, that Christ may appear on the scene, and be the central figure there. Nor does the absence of a system of divinity from Christ's sermons, prove that no such system existed in his mind. The articles of a creed, however well stated, are not fit to be made heads of a popular discourse, and yet the discourse and creed may not only coexist and agree, but the one may be the outgrowth and expression of the other. If it could be proved that truth did not lie in the mind of Christ as a carefully-arranged system of doctrine, it would not be justifiable to conclude that, therefore, we are to throw systematic theology to the winds. It is questionable whether God's perfect knowledge of his works is mapped out in the divine mind as we are obliged to map out the several departments of knowledge. Chemistry, botany, zoology and the like, are indispensable to us, and if we did not systematize our knowledge in that way, there would be endless omissions and confusions. Doctrine is the bony framework of truth—the body would, by its own dead weight, sink down into a shapeless mass without it, but it is neither wise nor needful to exhibit as a grim, gaunt skeleton. Moreover, the Bible is intended to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, but, at the same time, to enlist our agency in every practical way. The Bible reveals truths we could never, by any possibility, have discovered, but once made known to us, we are competent to arrange them, and it will be beneficial for us to do it. The outcry against doctrine, usually proceeds from those whose opinions are vague, and who, perhaps, like the gifted but fanatical Irving, "love to see ideas looming out of the mist," or from those who are consciously heterodox on some points, and lack the manhood to declare their convictions. The first class are to be pitied as mentally weak and undisciplined, and the second class are to be despised as—

"Craven souls who meanly shrink,
From the truth they needs must think."

But neither, nor both, however loud or long the outcry they raise against doctrine, will exert the slightest influence on those who, with Lord Bacon, know how grand a thing it is for the mind to "rest in Providence, move in Charity, and turn itself on the poles of Truth."

To give, in barest outline, a sketch of modern religious thought in relation to Christ, would be too large and unwieldy a task for an address or lecture like the present, while thoroughly to discuss the many points of interest that have arisen, would require a volume, or, indeed, a series of volumes. Two branches of the subject, those, however, of chiefest importance, will be all that can be gone into with any fullness on this occasion. These are the *person* and *work* of Christ. Not only are they, in themselves, considered points of prime importance, but the positions taken in regard to them, virtually settle all other questions of moment that spring up concerning Christ. Hence they have been largely and earnestly discussed during those recent years which have exhibited that remarkable attention to the subject in hand, which we have already taken occasion to notice.

Controversies about the person of Christ broke out quite early in the history of the Church, and raged with considerable violence. One great good that came out of them, was the clear and unambiguous language in which the doctrine held by