

in our cities be left uncared for? How long would Christian nations continue to wage Pagan wars with each other? How long would Materialism, Agnosticism, Pessimism, Atheism—the spiritual diseases of our time—resist the radiance of his new advent of Christ to the world? Theology, which will always remain the most interesting of studies, having Christ Himself as its centre, will then be fed continually with living bread. Its scholastic character will disappear; it will give us, instead of theories about Christ, Jesus Christ Himself, the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord. Faith in Him will mean no belief in some dogmatic creed; but living in His spirit, trusting His promises, feeling His sacred presence with us always, even to the end of the ages. Christ will be more and more the friend of the soul, the strength of its life, the guide of its thought, the inspiration of all our days. With this inspiration theology will be free and progressive, adapting itself to all the needs of human life, and yet solidly based on the deep experience of the heart, on the life hid with Christ in God.

"Our theology will be saturated with the three immortal principles—the three things which abide—Faith, Hope and Love. Then will be repeated the miracle of Pentecost, and no matter what our sect or party name, we shall all hear each other speaking in the tongue wherein we were born—that eternal language of the human heart, which goes back of creeds and formulas to the Christ who is formed within, the hope of glory."

Most people would be surprised to find that these are the words of a Unitarian. It is one hopeful sign of the times that Unitarianism has lost much of its cold dogmatic character of mere negation, and has assumed a much deeper spirituality than once belonged to it.

President Robinson, of Brown University, discussed this same topic in an able and suggestive manner. "There are two ways," he says, "in which the historical Christ has failed of due recognition as the true centre of theology; two great obstructions to a just view of Him, which have sometimes almost hidden Him from the popular mind. The first of these has been the externally organized and crystallized form of the Christian Church—a Church that has stood before the world with its organization and officials, as the representative of Christ, and the dispenser of His gifts. And when the inquirer asks: 'What must I do to be saved?' its answer should be: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,' and not: 'Come in with us, and thou shall be saved.' The so-called Church has too often failed to make the historical Christ the true centre of its teaching.

"Another obstacle to a due recognition of the central position of the historical Christ has been in an undue regard for creed, or for dogmatic and metaphysical theology, of which creed is properly the counterpart. A philosophical systematization of the collected beliefs respecting God and man and their relations is, of course, a necessity for all enlightened minds; but it may easily be constructed around some other centre than Christ or, even with Him for centre, it may be so used that the centre shall be hidden. Without Christ as the centre, our ideas of God are confused and conflicting. In Him, the inexorable justice and infinite mercy of God are united and harmonized. Metaphysics never can reconcile them. In Christ they are forever reconciled.

"Finally, Christianity must always have its apologetics. Its divine origin is perpetually challenged. It must prove itself to have come from God, and how shall this be done? Shall we bring the miracles of Christ and the Apostles across the waste of centuries, and set them down to-day to prove the Christian religion to have been from God? Let him do this who wishes. Shall we appeal to history? But history is obscure and open to dispute. For myself, I am willing to stake all on the person of the historical Christ. He is the insoluble problem for all sceptics. Whence was it that this untaught carpenter's son, trained in none of the schools, and under none of the philosophies of men, should have given religion and ethics for all men and for all times? There is but one solution: 'He came down from heaven,' and at the end could justly pray: 'O Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' On this Christ we rest our claim that Christianity is the religion of the ever-living God. Springing up out of the desolate wastes of Judaism, with the great, surging, black tide of heathenism all around him, this

Jesus spoke to man, and His words to-day hold us with the grip of Omnipotence. I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Son of Man, and the Saviour of the world."

President Porter, of Yale College, in his address on the same subject, points out that there was never a period in the Christian Church in which the minds of thinking men were so moved by the question: "What think ye of Christ?" as at the present moment. There has never been a time in which the historic Christ was so taught with living interest to the whole Church, never a time in which so many Lives of Christ have been written, or so many attempts have been made to render His life clear and distinct, to surround it by its appropriate setting; to face the humanity, that through it we may see the divine glory of the Master.

"It was expected that these investigations should cast new light upon Christian theology. And the question with which we have to do, I suppose, is the influence of the historic Christ, as now interpreted, and as likely to be understood, upon Christian theology. What will be that influence? In the first place, it will bring out more distinctly the fact that the power of the Christian religion—the power of what we call the Christian system—centres in the person of Christ.

"Systematic theology is, and always will be, a necessity to the Christian Church. Why? Because man must, as an intelligent being, reconcile his faith, so far as he may, with all his other thinking. Now that science is leading him from one fact and denial to another about the universe, man must recognize the relation of these new truths to the faith in Christ. For this reason his theology must be a progressive science; it must lay aside its old errors if it would be emancipated into new truths. In order to do this, theology must be free, as no other science is free. It must be independent, free to modify its old opinions and accept the new, so that we may hold fast to the Christ in whom we believe is the crown of our faith and the joy of our life. As a basis, therefore, of Christian fellowship, as a necessity for Christian union, as a prime condition of progress in our united strength, we must assert for theology all the freedom which its nature requires. Hence we must manfully eliminate from our scholastic creeds all that has been displaced by the progress of Christian or scientific truth. Every such creed must stand or fall by itself, whether it be the Westminster Confession or the Thirty-Nine Articles, or the decrees of the Council of Trent; they must be modified by any truth that proves itself to be true. I honour very greatly the memory of one Dr. Tuckney, a prominent member of the Westminster Assembly and one of the most positively Calvinistic, having been active in formulating the Confession, who says of himself: 'In the Assembly I gave my vote that the Confession of Faith put out by authority should not be sworn or subscribed to, we having been burnt on the hand in that kind before.' That man's name deserves to be immortalized. What mischief and division would have been spared the Christian Church if every scholastic and theological creed had been uttered and received simply as a declaration of the opinions of those who sent it forth, instead of being imposed by authority on other men and other generations. What frightful passions and desolating divisions and sects and schisms would have been avoided.

"We need now and then to be reminded that the Christ who was once seen by human eyes—the same Divine Man who looked out upon the disciples—is present from one generation to another, with all those whom He gains to His obedience. The historic Christ is the same. It is the personal influence which Christ exerts which gives all its meaning and value to our theology. Happy the man who comes under that influence! And of theology we may say, as our parting word, in the words of the poet:

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be.  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

The Rev. Chauncey Giles eloquently touches the same subject in a short but forcible address, from which we quote the following:

"How can we come to the Father? We cannot approach Him personally as we do human beings in this world. The only way is by thought, by knowledge. Then does He not declare there is no possibility of approaching the Father except through Him by means of the truths revealed through Him? We

cannot get any idea of God as an abstract, unorganized being. That is impossible. What did Jesus Christ come for? To reveal the Father. He declares that no man can get access to the Father, but by Him. The only way to get any idea of the Infinite Father is through Jesus Christ. He not only taught these truths, He also declared and was the embodiment of them. He demonstrated them in His life. In Jesus Christ we can see how the Father how God comes down to man and works under human conditions. The life of Christ on earth is a perfect illustration of the divine principles of theology brought down into the lowest phase of human life. We can see how the Father deals with fishermen, Magdalens, Pharisees, and the ignorant and erring. Jesus has shown us how we can get a true idea of how God works under human limitations. I do not know where else in the universe, or to what source we can go for any idea of God but to Jesus Christ."

We may appropriately close our quotations from these addresses by the following earnest words from Dr. E. P. Parker:

"Gentlemen, while you cannot hope to realize in this world political unity of the Church, while you never can hope to settle unity on the basis of settlements of theological opinions, you have rising before you beautifully the hope of a larger and nobler and more glorious unity than all that which I believe it is your mission in great part to bring to pass. In the twinkling of an eye, when the veil is removed, this great and difficult problem will be solved by those who depart—solved by all who sincerely and heartily profess and call themselves Christians, by St. Paul, St. Augustine, John Calvin, by Arminius, by John Wesley, by Toplady, by Channing, by Bushnell, by the Holy Church, the invisible members of those who love the truth of God in all of the world and in all the ages, and in which goodly fellowship and glorious company may God grant through His infinite mercy that you and I and all of us may at length be found."

These extracts have been given so fully from the Proceedings of the Council, because they represent the matured and careful thoughts of the most enlightened and liberal Christian thinkers of the United States on subjects deeply interesting to all Christians. From their utterances, and the influence they will have in raising the tone of Christian sentiment, we may well hope to see ere long, if not union, at least, a growing unity among the Churches—each being more and more willing to press less strongly the more speculative views concerning which men of differing moulds may never entirely agree, and to take their stand on the great, central truths which nearly all accept, and on Him who is the Truth. By this means may we not hope to see a united Church more complete than any division of it is now—a Church combining Presbyterian simplicity and sober-mindedness with Anglican order and beauty of service, Methodist warmth and aggressive zeal and Congregational liberality? When that time arrives the Christian Church shall more nearly realize the ideal of its Lord, and shall be prepared, through the higher inspiration that shall bless its unity, to win nobler triumphs at home and abroad.

FIDELIS.

#### KNOX COLLEGE PROFESSORSHIP.

MR EDITOR,—I thank "Status Questionis" and yourself for your respective references to my enquiry regarding the competency of the next Assembly to entertain substitute recommendations of Presbyteries instead of the nominations asked for by last Assembly. With regard to the motives brethren may have in making such substitute recommendations referred to by "Status Questionis," I am not in a position to speak. But it appears to me the question I submitted has not been fully answered, perhaps not clearly understood. I understand well enough that if a Presbytery simply declines to make a nomination it is the same as when a member declines to vote. But this does not fully meet the case. If a member does not see his way to vote for or against a given proposition, he may move an amendment, and the House would be bound to entertain it. When this is applied to the matter under discussion we find the parallel does not hold.

Permit me to put the case more concretely. I may mention names now without any breach of delicacy. Let it be supposed that a majority of those Presbyteries which make nominations name Dr. Proudfoot as the proper person to fill the chair. But suppose