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EDITORIAL

“**Y**E SHALL be my witnesses.” These words spoken just before His ascension express the final charge of Jesus to His disciples. And having tarried at Jerusalem until they had received power from on high through the coming of the Holy Spirit, they went out to make disciples of all nations by publishing the good news, that is, by confession of the name of Jesus, giving testimony or bearing witness to Him. The activity of the apostles may be summed up as that of bearing witness to Jesus, and, if we may believe tradition, all save one sealed their testimony with a martyr’s (witness’) death. And John tells us that he was in the isle called Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Of John the Baptist it is written, “There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for witness bearing, to bear witness of the Light.” (John 1:6f.) The apostle Paul informs us that at his conversion he was appointed a witness for Christ to all men. (Acts 22:15.)

And long before this final meeting the disciples must have been informed as to the character of their task. At least as early as Caesarea Philippi the paramount significance of witness bearing was brought home to them in a very forceful way. Jesus asked, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13.) Jesus did not ask this question as to what men were thinking and saying about him out of idle curiosity. He knew well enough that among the people he was regarded as a prophet, whether as Elijah or Jeremiah or the Baptist. No, he asked this question because what men were thinking and saying about Him determined their eternal destinies, and He wanted to call forth from Peter, as the spokesman for the twelve, the true confession which touches the heart of the Gospel, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And He impressed the significance of this confession upon them more when He declared that this confession of Peter was not the product of human observation or human reflection, but the revelation of His Father in heaven; and He then went on to say that upon this confession of Peter, or upon Peter as the first confessing member, He was to establish His church.

Witness bearing is therefore central. The church is true to her King only if she is a witnessing church. The minister is faithful to his Lord only if in season and out of season he proclaims the gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13f.) The believer proves his loyalty and sincerity by confessing the

THE SELF-AFFIRMATION OF JESUS

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“**B**UT Ye, who say ye that I am?” With that arresting question Jesus has confronted every generation. And in every generation two answers have been given—the answer of the natural man; and the answer which is the reaction to the Father’s revelation. There is something to be learned from each answer. That others saw in Him the likeness of John the Baptist, or Elijah, is a declaration that Jesus was no moral pacifist, no theological pussyfooter. That others saw Him the compassionate Jeremiah is proof that even the men of the world had before them a matchless revelation of divine compassion. That he was reckoned by the world a prophet testifies to the authority of His words and the response which they elicited in hearts first stamped with the Divine image.

Naturalism’s Answer. And the answer of naturalistic liberalism is today instructive, only as warning. The naturalist today sees in Jesus a unique religious character, perhaps a prophet (a spiritual “sport”). In the day of Jesus there were many religious conceptions. One after another these religious terms were applied to Him and consecutively the meaning of these terms, Christ, Sainted Intercessor, Lord, Logos, were emptied into the conception of Jesus—from the Messianic background of Jewish thought, from the apocryphal teachings of saints as intercessors, from the heathen mysteries, from Platonic and Stoic philosophy until by these successive steps the formula of Nicaea is arrived at. The whole process is a subjective matter—the Christian idea of Jesus is declared only a symbol.

But naturalism cannot stop even here. John long ago assured us that “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” The Unitarian Schism is a living proof of the words of the Apostle. Unitarian periodicals boast that their missionaries in the South start by giving the people Channing, since the South is too conservative for the real stuff. Well, Channing has been dead many years, and much water has flowed even under the Unitarian bridge since. The trend and the spirit of Unitarianism today is represented no longer by Channing. In his old church the exalted Bishop of Boston Brahmins can gather only a third or a fourth of a house for a morning service on a clear communion Sunday. A popular present-day Unitarian preacher is John Dietrich of Minneapolis, Minn., whose disciples (“Divinity” students) are sending shivers down the backs of staid Unitarian congregations to which they minister and are applying caustic criticism to those professors who defend theism around Boston. Dietrich advocates a godless religion of evolution and humanity. The only article in his creed is belief in man. In regard to God he is an agnostic with an anti-theistic trend. From Channing to Dietrich—just the journey charted by John; but Southerners ought to know what they are getting when they line up with Unitarian propaganda today.

But this godless religion is not confined to the Unitarian fold. The Boston papers in the month of March, 1927, were full of the fight of the modernistic pastor with the South Congregational Church of Pittsfield,

Mass., which resulted in his resignation being accepted. In the *Boston Globe* of March 18th, Rev. Vincent Godfrey Burns gave out an interview in his own defense. In this interview and an article published in the *Herald* for March 23rd, Mr. Burns was represented as a graduate of Union Theological Seminary (N. Y.) and "an ardent disciple of the Fosdick, modernistic school." The last paragraph of the interview published in the *Globe* (given out by Burns in his own defense) reads: "Millions bow in worship to an imaginary God every Sunday and on Monday they neglect the only God they can really help, their brother at the gate." This end of modernism, then, is a mere rehashing of Comte's "religion" of humanity; and the relegating of God to the limbo of a subjective fear complex, as a Columbia University professor recently declared in trying to popularize his psychology in a Sunday supplement.

Bousset in his *Kurios Christos* raised the question as to whether there was a historic basis for the finite God idea in early Christianity. After toying with it for a moment he dismissed it, as impossible. McGiffert has taken up the idea and presented it in his *God of the Early Christians*. From the Catholic Modernist camp, Dr. George La Piana has voiced a trenchant criticism of this thesis (*Ricerche Religiose*, Nov., 1925).

A review of the early literature shows that it is impossible to accept the idea that the early Christians had no urgent doctrine of a supreme God. R. Seeberg presents as the first of the features common to the Apostolic Fathers, "faith in the One God, the Creator of the world." Cf. e. g. Diognetus. The historic habitat of the religion of a finite God and this "godless Christianity" must be found in the rise of modern religious ideas.

Dietrich professes a supreme passion to save the world from Christian orthodoxy (*The Fathers of Evolution*—John Dietrich, 1927, pp. 249). He endeavors to show that the universe can be accounted for in a purely natural way and that there is no place for the supernatural. Matter and energy he regards as eternal; the universe contains the potentiality of all things; everything is the outcome by natural laws and forces of its preceding states. Alongside of these bald statements of one who professes to be a religious leader and interpreter should be put the broken hearted cry of a father, Louis Untermeyer, critic and poet. The papers of March 11th, 1927, quote Untermeyer on the suicide of his son at Yale to the effect that we are so scientifically orientated that there is no place left for religion; and that he will give his life to the restoring of a faith, at least, in life. Naturalism! Instead of steps up, an apotheosis to glory—steps down to death! "He that denieth the Son has not the father . . . he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (I John —).

Faith's Answer. Faith believes that Jesus is true and eternal God, who for us men and for our salvation, became incarnate. That he is the infinite and incomprehensible God; whose depths of being and heights of glory cannot be measured; Who in His days on earth took various names and titles which properly express various aspects of His work and relations as historically manifested; but no one of which exhausts His

meaning or glory. These names He Himself definitely took; or definitely approved in their content. By taking these different titles by wearing them He raised them. Even the name of Jesus, because of Him who bears it, becomes the Name which is above every Name. We believe that Jesus is infinite sided and that no one of these names exhausts His glory, nor all of them put together. Put him in any frame and He ennobles every noble picture; yea He overflows every mental container. The terms Messiah, Kurios, Logos do not add glory to Him; He bears those terms and raises each one to heights of glory, moral and metaphysical, surpassing fondest imaginings of saints, brightest hopes of Isaiahs. More than this, faith believes that in so receiving her Lord she is simply accepting His own lofty evaluation of Himself. Faith accepts Jesus' self-affirmation, she receives His self-disclosure.

Perhaps one of the best examples of this self-disclosure is found in Matthew 11:25-30. This passage is a veritable ocean of inexhaustible riches. We can only hope to dip a few cups from its fullness. For those who are critically minded it may be mentioned, in the beginning, that the essence of the passage is also found in Luke 10:21, 22. This is evidence for the fact that it must be included in any original Quell.

I. Jesus affirms His own Messianic Person and Mission. It is true that here we find a different tone from that of the current Jewish expectations; but that difference is just Jesus taking Messiahship as His garb and by wearing it lifting it to heights worthy of a God. For Him, Messiahship is not Israel-centered; but God-centered. In the midst of seeming disappointments He can rejoice in the Father. His supreme concern in the Messiahship is that presented by Isaiah, the servant. He was identified by baptismal words, "In whom I am well pleased," with the Servant-Messiah of Isaiah. He wrought as His great concern that the Father might be well pleased, might have all the glory and duty and service that would fill full the ideal of Messiahship. And His other great concern as Messiah was to obey the will of the Father in satisfying every need of human souls. He inaugurated His ministry with Isaianic words of good news for the destitute, release to the captive, the opening of eyes to those blinded by dungeon dark, liberty, acceptance with God. Here His matchless words are: Come! all ye that labor and are heavy laden—hither to me; and I will give you rest . . . ye shall find rest for your souls. How Jesus loves to assure us of His fullness of supply for our every need. Does the spirit sag? "I am the bread of life." Does the heart mourn? "I am the Resurrection and the Life . . . I bind up the broken heart." Is the hand blindly fumbling for a guide? "I am the light of the world . . . he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Are the dynamos of life exhausted in lassitude and weariness? "He that believeth in me shall never thirst; for the water which I will give shall be in Him a well of water springing up into life eternal." As our tender Southern poet, Sidney Lanier, wrote: "Where are the strong arms in which I too might lay me and repose and yet be full of the fire of life? And always through the twilight came answer from the other world

—Master, Master, there is one, one Christ. . . . And in His arms we rest.” “Come unto me and I will give you rest.” “Yea, Master,” Augustine replies, “Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” Jesus took the lowliest Messianic term which Isaiah gave, Servant, and put into it His immense consciousness of His own person. By wearing it and filling and glorifying it in utter obedience to God, in utter service to men, He manifested that the servant of all was the Lord of all. Through the form of Messiahship is seen that other Isaianic picture, Immanuel, the Holy One of Israel, come to be her Saviour.

II. Jesus Affirms His Lordship. “All things have been delivered unto me of my Father.” We do not need to wait for Antioch and Greek mysteries for the quality of Lordship. Jesus took and realized the conception of Lordship or Dominion in His relations with men on earth. His demands, and obligations are those of an absolute Lord. He will brook no second place in men’s affections, no delay in His call, no divided service. Especially the eschatological passages of the Synoptics abound in the loftiest ascriptions of dominion, and often with the use of the word Lord by Jesus Himself. The original Aramaic of this term may have been generally a mere title of respect. But as used by Jesus in these loftiest passages it approximates the ascription of divine glory to Himself. It is hard to see how even the word God could have heightened the glory which Jesus affirms of Himself in His use of Lord as recorded in Matthew 7:21; 25:44. Not lower is the usage of the 110th Psalm, of Jesus. And this usage of the 110th Psalm in the three Synoptics and the early speeches of Acts cannot easily be transferred to Gentile Christianity as Rawlinson (*The New Testament Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*) shows against Bousset’s hypothesis.

The earliest preserved prayer used by the Aramaic-speaking Christians at their celebration of the Lord’s Supper was Marana Tha—The Lord Cometh. Rawlinson and Deissmann find in this an evidence for the fact that Lord was used of Jesus in the original Jewish Christian Church. A careful study of the early speeches of Acts shows that the conception which the first Church had of Jesus was a religious one—fellowship with the exalted Kurios. In the Synoptics and in the early speeches of Acts the term Lord is used; and what is of much importance, the conception of Lordship is present very early. A critical reconstruction of the titles in the Synoptics does not remove the quality of Lordship from the Person there presented, standing self-supported in lonely might and majesty.

Nor is it possible to accept the view that Paul could have taken over a conception of Christ as that of a heathen cult Lord. Deissmann (*Paul*, translation 1926) declares that Paul ever remained a Jew, a Bible Jew, a *Septuagint* Jew. The Septuagint translated both Adonai and Jehovah by the Greek Kurios. Could this Hebrew of the Hebrews have used Kurios (as a Jew) of the supreme God, and Kurios of Jesus as a finite cult deity? Again, Deissmann finds that Paul speaks of the manifestation of Christ in the same words (ophthen) which the Septuagint uses of a Theophany.

"God revealed His Son in Me;" "just as God created light on the first day so He shined into my heart to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." This Septuagint Jew with his heart full of the theophanies of God to his people, and his mind full of Israel's God whom he worshiped as Kurios saw a theophany on the road of Damascus; and heard a voice speaking to him. And to his question who the Kurios might be, the answer came back "Jesus." Jesus affirmed His Lordship to His disciples in the word recorded in Matthew 11:27; He reaffirmed that Lordship by a divine theophany to Saul a worshipper of Jehovah, as Kurios.

III. Jesus Affirms that He is the Unique Revelation and Revealer of God. This great verse of Matthew in its heavenly grandeur has been called an aerolite from the Johannine heavens. Doubtlessly, many would like to relegate it elsewhere and obviate the need of dealing with the strong critical evidence of the Synoptics. But here it stands a great granite boulder towering above the landscape. As long as it stands Harnack's learned exposition of the Logos doctrine of Philo; Platonic and Stoic similarities suggested by Justin Martyr will fail to make the Logos doctrine a product of Greek philosophy. True Greek philosophic thinking immediately took up the term and on the basis of it brought in a vast amount of subordinationism, which still clings, in some quarters, to the doctrine of the Person of Christ. But the lofty consciousness of Jesus must be considered as standing behind the great prologue of the Fourth Gospel. He affirms that He, and He alone knows God, yea knows Him fully. Man can only know sense perceptions, we are told. But here is One who professes not only to know the *ding an sich*; but even to know it fully when that reality is the Father in Heaven. There is a fulness of knowledge and an interpenetration of being expressed in these words. The Father in all His fulness and majesty and glory of invisibility is known by no one—save by the Son. And the Son is of such fulness of divine glory and essence that only such an one as the Father can fully know Him. These words of supernal knowledge, of fulness of intimacy and closeness of fellowship bespeak an interpenetration and intussusception of spiritual interrelationship, and of identity of nature between the Son and the Father. Out of this divine Sonship the Messiah is the Revealer of the Father. Out of this transcendent consciousness of His Christhood comes the Logos doctrine found in that Gospel which has the loftiest appreciation of His heavenly glory. But it should be noted that Jesus used the word Son to express His relation to the Father and His likeness and His revealer. And this word Son, even more than Logos, was the basis of the formulation by the Church of the dogma of the consubstantial Deity of the Son.

Faith believes that in these pregnant words Jesus has allowed the veil to be drawn aside and something of His eternal divine glory to shine through. One of faith's greatest reasons for accepting the deity of Christ is that He taught His own deity; and His word is that of one to be trusted.

A word, then, to those to whom it hath been given to believe Jesus'

self-revelation. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you but my Father which is in heaven." Faith is a mighty thing, the mightiest thing—not because of him who has it; but because of Him who inspires it and of Him in whom it confides. When the deniers of that faith are legion; and their denials are absolute, let us press to our hearts that great word with which a young scholar by the name of John Calvin used repeatedly to establish the hearts of the little flock of Parisian Protestants, "If God be for us who can be against us?" And it is just this consoling sovereign view of God that was so potent and precious to our Calvinistic forefathers, which is presented in the eleventh chapter of Matthew. The Son on whom our souls depend, the Son whose depths of being only the Father can plumb, is the Son who sits in sovereign judgment upon the men and cities and nations of all history (Matthew 11:20-24), as the supreme, eternal, and final arbiter of destinies. The Father who hath revealed unto us this faith, whose heights of glory only the Son can fathom, is the Father who hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them to babes, because so to do is well pleasing in His own sight. (Matthew 11:25, 26.) Jesus makes Himself a co-sharer and fellow of the Father in the sovereign glory of God. Jesus assures us that our faith is reaction to the action of the sovereign God. The fact of faith is the blest consolation that the sovereign God is for us, "who can be against us?"