

The Relation of the Apostolic Teaching to the Teaching of Christ
Robert J. Drummond
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This book contains the last series of lectures delivered on the Kerr foundation to the students of the United Presbyterian Theological Hall, prior to its union with the Free Church Halls in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. The lectureship has become favorably known through the previous courses held under it, that of Dr. Orr on "The Christian View of God and the World as centering in the Incarnation," that of Dr. Forrest on "The Christ of History and of Experience," and that of Dr. Kidd on "Morality and Religion." The present contribution fully maintains the high standard set for it by its predecessors.

Mr. Drummond's choice of subject was an unusually happy one. Through the ever-growing production in the field of Biblical Theology and the constantly deepening interest taken even by the non-theological public in this line of study, the question how far the diversity of Biblical teaching thus brought to light is consistent with the ideal unity and harmony of revelation has become pressing and practical to an eminent degree. That the danger connected with the over-emphasizing of the multiformity of New Testament teaching is far from imaginary, appears from the response which the cry "Back to Christ" has awakened in the present generation. The author very convincingly shows how utterly unreasonable and self-contradictory this demand is. First of all, because we have no direct access to Christ, all our knowledge of Him being mediated by the testimony of His followers. In reality, therefore, the demand amounts to this,—that we must go back from the New Testament writers as *expounders* of Christ to the New Testament writers as *recorders* of the life and teaching of Christ. When put in this form the catching phrase at once loses much of its plausibility. That these writers are more reliable as historians than as doctrinal interpreters is far from self-evident. In the second place, it may be properly urged that the influence exerted by Christ upon His disciples as reflected in the New Testament documents, constitutes one of the prime factors in determining what Christ actually was, what forces were stored up in Him. To this must be added in the third place the consideration that Jesus Himself clearly anticipated the carrying on of His teaching activity by those of His followers who had been most intimately associated with Him, and promised them the guidance of the Holy Spirit as ample qualification for this task, so that to appeal from the Apostles to Christ is in reality to appeal from the Christ working indirectly to the Christ working directly; and it betrays a relatively low opinion of the supernatural resources of Christ as a revealer to assume that in the latter capacity He deserves greater confidence than in the former.

We think it a cause for regret that this last principle is not pressed by the author to the full extent of its applicability. Throughout, the Apostolic teaching is viewed too exclusively in the light of a Spirit-guided unfolding of a deposit of truth already given in the teaching of Christ. This would seem to exclude Apostolic teaching from the category of revelation proper. Undoubtedly to some extent this is in accord with the New Testament representation on the subject. But alongside of this runs another representation. In many cases the Apostles claim to be the recipients of revelation in the strict sense of the word, and to transmit such truth as could not have been discovered by them through mere reflection upon the teaching of Christ. Notably this is the case with Paul. And yet on page 288, speaking of Paul's doctrine of the atonement, the author says: "And Paul combining with this (i.e., with Christ's hints on the meaning of his death) what he knew by experience of man's

spiritual need and what he had found for himself, in harmony with Christ's hints, in the Cross, was prepared to meet inquirers and say why it was that the Christ must die." Such a mode of viewing the connection between Jesus and Paul prevents the author from using the strongest weapon in defense of his main thesis. Only where Christ and the Apostles are recognized as coordinated, if not coequal, links in the chain of supernatural revelation does the absurdity of the demand "Back to Christ" become fully apparent.

After introducing his subject the author defines his position with reference to the problems of New Testament Introduction. This is throughout conservative. It would have been better if these critical presuppositions had been simply stated without any attempt at justification. It was impossible to touch more than the surface of the discussion within such narrow limits as the author here had to set for himself. On the other hand it would have been extremely desirable to make clear at the beginning how the critical views adopted and the conclusions reached on the essential harmony of Apostolic teaching with that of Christ are interdependent. A decisive factor here is the acceptance or rejection of the authenticity of the Johannine discourses of Jesus. If these are admitted in evidence, the demonstration of the substantial agreement between the Pauline teaching and that of Jesus becomes a comparatively easy matter. In the opposite case a much longer and more laborious process of investigation will be required to lay bare the roots of the Pauline theology in the doctrine of Jesus. For all apologetic purposes, the lectures would have gained in value if the writer had reckoned more with this twofold possibility and shaped his argument so as to meet both positions. As it is, the evidence drawn from the synoptics and that derived from John are so interwoven that it is not possible to tell at a glance how much convincing force the former would possess for a reader who felt bound to discount the latter.

In our opinion Mr. Drummond fails to do justice to the teaching of John the Baptist, as an anticipation of specifically New Testament truth, on more than one important point. Are John's doubting inquiry and our Lord's statement placing him outside of the kingdom sufficient warrant for the view that "John's work was often of the very opposite spirit from that of Christ;" that "John was a child of the Essenian-Apocalyptic influence, looking for a Messiah who should lead on a purified Israel to the expulsion of the Romans, and to a world-empire which should be the kingdom of God?" That modern writers who reject the historicity of the fourth Gospel can construe the Synoptical data to this effect we understand; but we do not see how it is possible to reach such results after unqualified acceptance of the Johannine record and careful combination of it with the Synoptical picture. The man who said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," stood certainly at a far remove from the prevalent Messianic hope of the time, even in its purest form, with which Mr. Drummond would have us identify him.

The two following chapters on The School of Christ and on The Features of Christ's Teaching contain much excellent material, but might have been considerably abbreviated, or even wholly omitted, without affecting the main discussion in the sequel. Chapter 4 treats of The Common Assumption. By this the author means the soteriological character of the Gospel of both Jesus and the Apostles; and in connection with it the anthropological and hamartiological presuppositions are discussed. Passing on from this to the detailed examination of the Gospel-content the author treats in successive chapters of The Kingdom of God and its Variants, of The Son of Man and the Son of God, and of The Intentions of the Cross Hinted and Grasped (Chaps. 5, 6, 7). He finds this

order of treatment suggested by the development observable within the limits of Jesus' own objective teaching,—in which the kingdom is first made prominent, afterward the Messiahship, and toward the close of the ministry the Cross. In regard to the Lord's subjective consciousness, it should be remarked, the author denies all evidence of development. In the treatment of these three topics there is further this difference, that the discussions of the Kingdom and the Cross move forward from the teaching of Jesus to that of the Apostles, while in dealing with the Christological problem the reverse order is followed, a change of method for which the reason is not apparent. The ninth chapter contains a comparative discussion of Faith as Man's Subjective Response. Chapter 10 formulates the results and points out their application.

It is impossible in a brief review to do justice to the richness and suggestiveness of the author's treatment of the many complicated questions on which these chapters touch. We must content ourselves with referring to a few points where it seems to us there is room for diversity of opinion. The author is not always successful in grasping and reproducing the concrete, individual aspect under which the truth of the Gospel appears with each teacher or writer. This defect is no doubt largely explainable from his professed aim to extract the ideal substance of the truth from the several forms of presentation, for the purpose of comparison. How wholly inadequate, e.g., is the description of the kingdom as "a great spiritual association, in which God's will is supreme," to give us a definite conception of the manner in which Jesus visualized the new order of things He came to establish? This is a description, indeed, which in its generality might be appropriated by the most naturalistic interpretation of our Lord's religious teaching, while in reality the idea of the kingdom is supernatural to its very core. Probably it has something to do with this, when the use of the kingdom-thought is regarded as an accommodation on the part of Jesus, and a similar view is suggested even with reference to the idea of Messiahship. We do not believe it can be proven that our Lord consciously treated these supreme conceptions of His teaching as mere figures, in the sense that He possessed side by side with them and placed above them a more abstract, less historically conditioned form of representation. His relative silence during the later stage of His ministry on the topic of the kingdom certainly cannot prove this, because there is abundant evidence that up to the very last the kingdom-idea retained its supreme place in His mind, if not in His teaching. Mr. Drummond could hardly have failed to perceive this, if he had given due prominence to the vigorous eschatological trend of thought which from the beginning is associated with the idea of the kingdom. Both the kingdom and the Messiahship were infinitely more to our Lord than current Jewish notions; they were both given to Him as authoritative revelation concepts, which as such could not but embody eternally valid principles in eternally valid forms. The author fully recognizes this of the divine fatherhood. We fail to see why the two other ideas are not entitled to the same distinction. Of course, all earthly religious language contains a figurative element, but there is a wide difference between the recognition of this and the ascription to Jesus of conscious accommodation. It would be better to say that kingship and Messiahship are the ideal concrete expressions not merely for that time, but for all time, of the two fundamental religious facts of the divine supremacy and divine mediation in the sphere of redemption.

It is perhaps also connected with the one-sided appreciation of the idea of the kingdom, that so little emphasis is thrown on the divine sovereignty and no attempt is made to point out the roots of the Pauline doctrine on this subject in the teaching of Jesus. There is certainly no scarcity of material for this in the discourses of the fourth Gospel, and even in the Synoptics the points of contact are easily

found by one who knows how to look beneath the surface. What the author says in refutation of the alleged dualistic element in the Gospel of John, viz.: that the passages in question are simply the result of the Apostle's looking at spiritual processes from the point of view of their final outcome, can be hardly called a serious solution of the difficulty. Most of these statements are not words of John but of Jesus, and they do not interpret the original human choice in the light of its eternal issue, but in the light of a primordial ideal relationship to God. On the whole it must be acknowledged that the Calvinistic affinities in our Lord's teaching have hitherto failed to find due recognition, a thing not to be wondered at if we remember that the great body of Biblico-theological literature has been produced by non-Calvinistic writers. It is the more to be regretted that a professed Calvinist, as we infer Mr. Drummond from a remark on page 153 to be, should in entering this field make no serious effort to supply the deficiency.

Among the most striking and forceful parts of the book we should count the Christological discussion in Chapter 6. Especially pertinent are the remarks on pp. 214, 215, about the modern tendency to restrict the Messianic idea as held in the consciousness of both Jesus and the disciples to the narrowest Jewish limits. Mr. Drummond well points out how this involves a marked discrepancy between the treatment accorded to the idea of the kingdom and that accorded to Jesus' presentation of Himself as king; and how the latest efforts to reduce again to Jewish limits Christ's conception of the kingdom seem dictated by an undefined sense of this incongruity. The bearing of the date of appearance of the Synoptical Gospels, midway between Paul and John, on the interpretation of the Christological views reflected in these Gospels is lucidly stated. The modern Arianizing construction of the Pauline Christology by such writers as Holtzmann and Pfleiderer might, perhaps, have been more directly and elaborately formulated and criticized than is done on page 230. With the author's exclusion from 2 Cor. 3:17, of all reference to the personal Spirit we cannot agree. It is true the purport of the Apostle's statement *ο δε κυριος το πνευμα εστιν* is to represent Christ as the Source of quickening power in contrast with the *γραμματα* of the law; but Paul does not know of any quickening power in the abstract the very point of the saying is, that through His soteriological identification with the Holy Spirit Christ can inwardly liberate and transform men. The interpretation of Phil. 2, on page 233, keeps happily free from all kenoticism. We are not quite sure that the *υπαρχων* can be pressed with Gifford so as not merely to leave room for, but to express the continued existence of Christ after the incarnation in the *μορφη θεου*. Interesting is the note on page 215, in which the author rightly contends against Ménégos, that the ideas of supernatural conception and preexistence can have been no more mutually exclusive to the Synoptics, than in the view of many writers the ideas of preexistence and natural birth were to Paul.

In the discussion of the significance of Christ's death it is gratifying to notice that its vicarious character is strenuously upheld. The author does not shun to say that it means to Jesus Himself the penalty for sin. So far as Jesus' own consciousness is concerned there can be no doubt of this; and two or three passages are quite as conclusive in proving it as a greater number would be. It is a different question, however, to what extent Jesus explained this penal significance of his death to the disciples. Here the number of passages becomes of importance. Is it not somewhat of an exaggeration to say that He made it abundantly plain how intimately and necessarily His own death and resurrection were associated with the bestowal of the forgiveness of sins? Our Lord could scarcely have done this so long as the fact itself had not transpired. It was reserved for Apostolic teaching to give the doctrinal interpretation of the fact. The author here obviously is too much under the

influence of his principle that all Apostolic teaching must be a mere unfolding of the teaching of Jesus and can add no new revelation-content, such as would interpret the facts of Christ's career rather than explain his words. The statement made on page 273, in connection with the exegesis of Mark 10:45, that *λυτρον* is used in the Septuagint in a sacrificial sense, is in this form misleading. It is only in classical Greek and in the New Testament epistles that the conceptions of *λυτρον* and sacrifice are associated. That Jesus had this association in mind when He spoke of the giving of his soul as a ransom for many, may be made plausible from the analogy of the sacrificial implication of the words spoken at the Last Supper; but it cannot be affirmed with certainty. The distinction that in the institution of the Supper the bread has predominant reference to the Incarnation, whereas the cup concentrates attention on the Death, has little to support it. Whatever there is in the symbolism of the elements referring to a life-communion with Christ, besides being common to both, is not retrospective, but prospective; it points to a communion to be made possible through His atoning death, with the exalted rather than with the incarnate Christ as such.

In the chapter on Faith exception may be taken to the interpretation put upon the phrase "faith is counted for righteousness," viz.: "Given that trust, God counts it to a man for righteousness—i.e., not as a substitute for it, but as the thing itself in germ, the attitude of heart and will, which will inevitably express itself in acts which please Him." This view is not only different from but directly opposed to the function Paul ascribes to faith in justification, and which is set forth quite correctly by the author in the preceding and following pages.

We conclude our notice with a tribute of admiration for the diligence which, in the midst of the many labors of a modern city pastorate, succeeded in reading and digesting so much of the vast literature on so comprehensive a theme. The lectures throughout betray a more than superficial acquaintance with both ancient and recent discussion of the topics reviewed. The form also into which the author casts his thoughts makes the book delightful reading from beginning to end. No one will peruse it without being instructed and edified at the same time.