

Concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God. By William Cleaver Wilkinson. The Griffith and Rowland Press, Philadelphia, 1916. 233 pp. \$1.00 net.

The writer of this review is minded to begin it by briefly recording an experience. Before taking up the volume by Dr. Wilkinson he had just had occasion to read for review several books of a religious and theological, or semi-religious and semi-theological, character. The writers of these volumes were earnest men as a rule, some of them able writers. But, as it happened, this particular group of books was written by men who made upon the reader the impression of having lost their way. They were straining their eyes to discover a clear path for their feet. They assumed the obsolescence of belief in Jesus as divine Saviour and scorned the idea of his resurrection from the dead. They spoke as if some tyranny of scientific method compelled them to accept nothing which belongs to traditional or New Testament Christianity. Then we turned to and read Dr. Wilkinson's discussion about Jesus Christ. The effect was like passing from the jungle into the open country, out of shadows into sunshine. An inevitable thought arose by way of inference. We have on the one hand a great host of writers on religious subjects with a great variety of theories and views of religion, who agree in surrendering Christianity as a supernatural redeeming power on earth, but who are not at all agreed as to what substitute to offer the hungry hearts of men. On the other hand we have another great host of writers who are equally convinced of the fact of the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the reality of our redemption in him. No value, no need, no requirement of the religious life remains unsupplied by the religion of Christ. He is the answer and the only answer to the questions raised and left unanswered by the host of writers who repudiate him. The world asks these writers for bread and they give a stone. The world asks the Christian writers for bread and bread is supplied. This is the explanation of the one mystery which seems ever insoluble to the class of anti-Christian writers to whom we refer. The mystery to them is this: Why

on earth, in view of the decisive and final overthrow of Christianity as supernatural religion, including the resurrection of Jesus, do the Christian millions go on holding the antiquated views as if nothing had happened? For that they do go on holding these views is beyond all question. All the assaults of modern unbelief in all its various forms have failed even to shake, much less destroy, the fabric of belief in a supernatural Christ.

The volume before us by Dr. Wilkinson would be criticized by the opponents of the Christian view on various grounds. He would be arraigned especially as lacking the "modern" point of view. But this would mean chiefly that he did not accept a particular set of results held by a particular group of moderns. In a word, the millions who agree with Dr. Wilkinson are not "moderns" at all, they are "ancients," according to these critics.

Dr. Wilkinson always writes clearly and forcibly. He always exhibits a carefully discriminating spirit. It is true that he usually writes as an advocate. He accepts certain things as settled. He is not always in search of truth on all subjects. He does sometimes put periods where others would leave interrogation points. And if it be true that the "modern" and "scientific" spirit requires us to abstain from beliefs of any kind, and requires us to settle nothing, then Dr. Wilkinson and many others are not modern or scientific. But we deny the truth of this definition of scientific and modern. Inquiry does sometimes crystallize into belief. An "open" state of mind does sometimes become "static" within the limits of genuine discovery of truth. A writer must show appreciation of alleged objections, must show familiarity with the field of evidence, must weigh considerations *pro* and *con*, in order to be "modern" and "scientific." But no set of conclusions can be regarded with truth, as identical with "the modern" view since modern and scientific men hold a variety of views on the same subject in many instances.

In the volume before us Dr. Wilkinson discusses the problem of Jesus in the light of all modern learning. He brings to bear the saving gift of common sense in many connections where the minds of men have been befuddled over details. This is especially

true in his dealing with the alleged discrepancies in the Gospels concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Dr. Wilkinson has some remarkably wise things to say about the meaning of experience. He shows beyond a peradventure that if we cannot pass from experience to objective fact the foundations of all knowledge are destroyed. This is a crucial point in dealing with the Christian religion. It is a religion of fact. The historical foundations are there, and there to stay. The results, in experience, of Christ's energy in human souls, are facts. They were results produced by a risen Christ, who became the causal force producing Christianity. Dr. Wilkinson's discussion goes to the heart of the "problem" of Christianity at the outset. If Christ be not risen then our whole Christian claim is vain, an empty thing. No candid reader can follow the argument for the fact of Christ's resurrection and remain unconvinced. Nothing except a philosophy which prejudices the case can possibly set aside the evidence.

The Saviourhood of Jesus which is discussed in the latter part of the volume is full of interest and suggestiveness. I can mention only one or two points. The author of course recognizes the atoning work of Christ as the ground of remission of sins. He points out the fact that "altruism," the much vaunted ideal of the modern man, finds its highest embodiment in Jesus Christ. It appears, so to speak, as an organic part of the atoning death. This death is the only cause adequate to produce the altruism men so much crave.

Dr. Wilkinson makes no apologies for Paul. He gladly exalts Paul as a medium, indeed the chief medium, which the risen and glorified Christ chose for exerting his influence on mankind. In Paul Christ demonstrates his Saviourhood in its most striking instance. Christ is a present force in the world enabling us to live as Christians should live.

The author employs the word mystic and mystical in a sense which is somewhat narrow. He declares that Paul was saved from mysticism by his sanity and common sense. Mysticism here means detachment from the practical, the ethical, a life of "pure, rapt contemplation, unrelated to life in outward attitude and

behavior." (p. 214.) This is indeed the older meaning of mystical. But modern usage has broadened it to include the inward communion and fellowship of man's spirit with God, which is compatible with devotion to the most practical affairs.

I think Dr. Wilkinson is mistaken also in his claim that "the only true progress towards the extension and establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth is effected by increasing the number of real Christians." (p. 221.)

Of course the center of that progress is the regeneration of individual souls and direct effort toward this end is the chief task. But the Kingdom of God is "righteousness and peace." Every form of righteousness, of justice, of equity, is so much progress towards the Kingdom of God. The abolition of the liquor traffic, the destruction of the sweat shop, the overthrow of race-track gambling, and many other things which might be named are truly the expression of the petition in the Lord's prayer "thy will be done on earth." I see nothing to be gained and much to be lost by allowing the "moral reformers" and sociologists ground for accusing Christians of indifference to the ills of society. This they are sure to do if the Christian program does not in some emphatic way include the improvement of human relations on earth.

Apart from these points, however, this discussion by Dr. Wilkinson is a powerful statement of the evangelical view of Jesus Christ and his salvation, abounding in fine insights and discriminations, and will prove a tonic to the faith of many who need reassuring amid the conflicting voices of the modern world.

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The Gospel of Good Will—As Revealed in Contemporary Scriptures. William DeWitt Hyde, President Bowdoin College. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1916. \$1.50 net.

Dr. Hyde presents in these chapters what he conceives to be the essentials of religion—Christianity—but in language from which the ordinary terms of theology are carefully excluded. He is persuaded that there are minds today who have rejected religion in the ordinary acceptance of the term, who are never-