

A Quest for the Authentic Jesus

D. A. T. THOMAS

The title I agreed to speak on was 'Knowing Christ through the church'. When I began to ponder this I was first faced with the fact that I could not in a real sense speak of knowing Christ 'through' the church, since as part of the church and committed to the faith it proclaims I could only realistically speak of knowing Christ 'in' the church. However, on further reflection it seemed to me that I could not even tackle that problem without some reflection on whom I was to know in the church, or if such a question can be put 'What kind of Jesus am I to know'? This is an important question to me both as a professing Christian and as one whose accepted calling is the establishing of others in their Christian profession and the bringing of others to a profession of Christian faith. And in this I confess to having been profoundly affected, I know not how long ago, by words written by the late William Temple, one-time Archbishop of Canterbury, to the then Rev. (later the Rt. Rev. Monsignor) Ronald Knox in defence of his views as published in the Anglican symposium '*Foundations*'. William Temple wrote, 'I am not a spiritual doctor trying to see how much Jones can swallow and keep down; I am more respectable than that: *I am Jones himself asking what there is to eat?*'¹ I understand this to mean that questions are now, as they were then 55 years ago, being asked about the fundamentals of the Christian faith. And I do not mean those challenging questions continually being posed by the incredulous outsider, but the honest questions being asked by the puzzled and faithful insider. They are questions asked out of an environment of rapidly enlarged areas of knowledge about man and his environment. Further, these questions are not only being asked by the theologically uninformed layman but also by the often highly theologically informed professional, i.e. teaching professors and bishops. In certain circles the asking of these questions is regarded as at least dangerous to the faith, if not downright disloyalty to the faith. One has only to recall the horrified gasps

¹ F. A. Iremonger, *William Temple* (Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 162.

which arose among the faithful when a Bishop dared to ask some embarrassing questions in a book entitled 'Honest to God',² a few years ago. At least one defender of the faith seemed more concerned with the fact that a Bishop was doing this than that it was being done at all.³ Though the dust of that publication has died down somewhat, the questions posed there are still with us, and should be demanding our attention more and more. The surprise for some of us at that time was that others should be surprised that anyone should be asking such questions when they had already been posed in various guises or the past 60 years or so, as we see from that publication *Foundations*⁴ previously mentioned. And also that these questions were painful thorns in the daily life of faith of many of us who went through theological seminaries in the ten years prior to the publication of 'Honest to God'.

In an essay of like temperament entitled 'Towards a Christology for Today',⁵ Canon H. Montefiore opened as follows, 'What think you of Christ?' There can hardly be a more obvious question than this for any Christian to face; 'for our Christianity stands or falls by our answer' (p. 149). With due respect I think there is a prior and more pertinent question than this, a question again taken from our Lord Jesus himself, a question which evokes an answer in terms of Messiahship, 'Who do you say that I am?' To put the question 'What think you of Christ?' as the crucial question is to accept that you have already made a decision about Jesus, and after that it is just a matter of working out the implications of the word Christ. Whereas the crucial question is 'Who do you say Jesus is?' This question as will be readily seen is open to a number of answers, in a way in which Canon Montefiore's question is not. This is not intended as theological hair-splitting. To ask 'Who do you say Jesus is?' demands an answer and commitment. To ask 'What think you of Christ?' means that some kind of commitment has already been made, and for many people in the world today it is a problem of 'Shall there be a commitment?' that is crucial. Or to put it in William Temple's terms to ask 'What think you of Christ?' is to enquire how much Jones can swallow and keep down, to ask 'Who do you say Jesus is?' is to enquire what there is to eat. This is so on the basis that to use the word Christ of Jesus means to have made a faith-judgement already, though it is realized that the word Christ in its turn is open to a variety of interpretations all tied up with the question 'Who do you say Jesus is?' All we are saying, however, is that the question of Christology is still an open one. It is hardly necessary to

² J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1963).

³ J. I. Packer, *Keep Yourselves from Idols* (London, Church Book Room Press, 1963), p. 3.

⁴ B. H. Streeter (Ed.), *Foundations* (London, Macmillan Co., 1912).

⁵ A. Vidler (Ed.), *Soundings* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), Ch. 7.

enumerate the many scholars who have pointed to the fact that Chalcedon, for instance, far from solving the Christological problem, only served to present succeeding generations with more Christological problems.⁶ Even those who take a positive attitude towards Chalcedon reinterpret it in a way in which the original is barely discernible. Also the fact that innumerable books, essays, and chapters of books are still written on Christology is evidence that it is still very much an open question. All this is no more than one would expect if we accept that Christology is part of the whole realm of mediating 'between the mystery, which is *theos*, and the understanding, is *Logos*'⁷ while the 'mystery' is constant the 'understanding' is constantly changing. In other words, theology is a thing which lives against the background of its environment as those who theologize live against the background of their environment.

Further, since it is with knowledge of Jesus that we are concerned, or in other words, Christology is a crucial part of the whole of theology. Although it would appear that for the moment theology seems more concerned with the existence of God as God, it will be seen that for a Christian to partake of the search for a meaningful dialogue about God, ultimately he can only do so from belief in the God, who is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian ultimately cannot talk about God meaningfully except on the basis of what he believes about Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God. This in itself should show us the urgency of the question of Christology, both for our understanding of Jesus, but more importantly for our understanding of God. What we believe about Jesus is crucial for our belief about God, and it is to this belief about Jesus to which we must now address ourselves.

When Jesus asked that crucial question, 'Who do you say that I am?' we are told that Peter answered, 'You are the Christ'. But that answer as we can see, though from one angle gives us a full answer, from another angle only raises innumerable other questions. For instance, one may ask 'But what do you mean by Christ?' and the answer(s) to that question is(are) by no means simple. But this much we can accept that Peter's answer rose out of his experience of what Jesus had said and done. So we might say that in order to examine the question of Christology we need only examine the evidence we have for the words and works of Jesus. But as we know all too well in our time examining the evidence we have for the words and works of

⁶ Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 65; G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, W. Heinemann Ltd., 1952), pp. 279-280; P. Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (London, S.C.M. cheap edition, 1966), p. 40; G. L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London, S.P.C.K., 1940), p. 298; *Foundations*: see the essay by William Temple, p. 134; John Hick, *Christianity at the Centre* (London, S.C.M., 1968), p. 33; *Soundings*: see the essay by Canon Montefiore, p. 156.

⁷ P. Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (London, 1951), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

Jesus is by no means as simple as was once believed. The Gospels, even the Synoptics, are not the simple documents a more innocent age than ours accepted them to be. While traditional-historical criticism has veered between extreme scepticism and cautious conservatism it would appear that we may be now entering a period of relative stability in our evaluation of the evidence of the words and works of Jesus. No one would claim absolute confidence in any method so far devised, but it would seem that at the very least we have been taught to be more discerning in evaluating the evidence, and we may be on the way to achieving a fairly solid agreement on the authentic words and works of Jesus, which will give us a clearer picture of what Jesus thought of himself. At least we have one recent, fairly cautious evaluation in the work of R. H. Fuller.⁸ In his summary at the end of his chapter 'The Historical Jesus: His self-understanding' this is what he says. Jesus understood his mission in terms of eschatological prophecy and was confident of his vindication by the Son of man at the End. As eschatological prophet he was not merely announcing the future coming of salvation and judgement, but actually initiating it in his words and works.⁹ There is no mention, let it be noted, of any self-consciousness of divinity in the evidence which Prof. Fuller has very carefully sifted over the years.

From biblical exegesis we move on to systematic theology as it is expounded against the background of modern philosophical trends. Much of this has been encapsulated for us by the Bishop of Woolwich in *Honest to God*. Where he also links it up, as one must, with the evidence of biblical exegesis.¹⁰ Further we have Paul Van Buren saying that the birth of Jesus 'was unique, for it was the birth of the man who fulfilled Israel's role'. His uniqueness, however, did not make him 'more than a man', 'whatever that would be; the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth, according to the witness of the New Testament, consisted in his being the man who bore a particular calling from Yahweh, to which he responded in his own particular history'.¹¹

Dr. William Barclay speaking for a less elevated audience than Dr. Van Buren perhaps is more cautious but nevertheless seems to point in the same direction when he says, 'I think we can still without hesitation call Jesus God in a hymn of adoration while to state it as a theological dogma still evokes a certain hesitancy'.¹² There is indeed a great deal of hesitancy which sometimes could be described as a camouflaged refusal to acknowledge it clearly.

⁸ *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London, The Lutterworth Press, 1965).

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁰ Robinson, *op. cit.*, Ch. 4.

¹¹ Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹² W. Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1962), p. 33.

The late Paul Tillich carefully evaluated the steps by which the man Jesus came to be acknowledged as divine. He found four stages in the development of the use of Christological symbols: (1) 'These symbols have arisen and grown in their own religious culture and language', (2) Their use 'by those to whom they had become alive as expressions of their self-interpretation and as answers to the questions implied in their existential predicament', (3) 'The transformation that these symbols underwent in meaning when used to interpret the event on which Christianity is based', and (4) 'Their distortion by popular superstition, supported by theological literalism and supranaturalism.' The four symbols which are exposed to this treatment are 'Son of Man', 'Son of God', 'Christ' and 'Logos'.¹³ In the case of 'Son of God' stage 4 is reached when it is distorted by being 'taken literally and a human family situation is projected into the inner life of the divine'.¹⁴ If this is acknowledged there is no need to spell out the distortion which has taken place not only in official Church formularies and popular preaching but also within the Canon itself, e.g. Rom. 8:32. Once again the implication seems to be that we must take another look at the so-called 'divinity' of Jesus.

But none of this would have arisen had it not been for the fact that Christian faith is based on the belief that through Jesus all men are saved. Christology has to be grounded in Soteriology, and it is here perhaps that we run into our greatest difficulty, for popular Christian belief demands that if Christ is Saviour then he must be divine, or conversely, it is because he is divine that we are saved. But even here the evidence is not as simple as it would seem. Let us make one thing clear and that is from the Christian view of man and his predicament only God can save. Christianity has firmly refuted that man can in any meaningful way save himself. Therefore it would seem that to deny the divinity of Christ is to deny a cardinal belief. But is this really so? If we turn to the Old Testament, which should be in a real sense our prime source-book for understanding the categories of the New Testament, we find that alongside a firm belief in the power of God and God alone to save, salvation in O.T. terms is achieved through human agency.¹⁵ This is clearly seen in Judges 2:16, 18. 'Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them.' 'Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he (the Lord) saved them from the hands of

¹³ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1964), Vol. II, Ch. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127. 'If one receives a literalistic answer to (the) question, (i.e. what do you mean by the 'Son of God'?) one must reject it as superstitious.'

¹⁵ See P. V. Prema Sagar, 'Salvation in the Old Testament', section 3 (a paper delivered at the Society for Biblical Studies, 4th Conference, Bangalore, October, 1968).

their enemies all the days of the judge.' This is borne out in the New Testament (Rom. 5:15, 18; 1 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 1:11). 'Only God can save mankind. But it has pleased His wise providence to save man only through man and in man.'¹⁶ Whatever else is said in the New Testament this truth is never lost sight of. As the writer to the Hebrews says, 'For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham.' (1:16) That being the case our redemption must also be won by a 'descendant of Abraham'.¹⁷ One consequence of this is that it is not necessary to posit the divinity of Jesus in order to believe in our redemption, in fact, a veering towards the divinity of Jesus which seems to be the occupational hazard of the church definitely jeopardizes our redemption. One further thing should be stated here and that is that again in popular Christianity and often in not so popular Christianity redemption is seen as the divinization of man as the form of his redemption. 'He became what we are that we might become what He is.' For this one can find no biblical precedent, in fact, this statement undermines a fundamental belief in the distinction between Creator and creature, upon which the Bible is in a real sense grounded. But if this statement is accepted then it is easier, indeed imperative, to conceive of Jesus as in some sense divine, if not actually God.

But at this point one must confess to being baffled by the fact that even the most radical of those writing today stop short of questioning the conclusion to which the church both in the New Testament and in the centuries following came to. Having accomplished what seems to me the complete demolition of any claim to the divinity of Jesus, Prof. Fuller, for instance, hopes that we will continue to acknowledge the 'mythological language' of the Nicene Creed and our Christmas carols, 'For although both carol and creed are couched in mythological language, they are the very life-blood of Christian faith and truth, which asserts that Jesus Christ is the saving act of God'.¹⁸ The synopsis of Canon Montefiore's essay says, 'Jesus may be called divine because in him God acted to enable men to find living relations with God and their fellow men'.¹⁹ Paul Van Buren says, 'The fathers wanted to say "God of God", and in our own way we have said the same'.²⁰ G. L. Prestige can still speak of 'divine humanity', 'true Son of God, true son of Mary'.²¹ Wm. Barclay says, 'What we can see in Jesus is God in his attitude and in his relationship to men, and that is all we need to know. That is

¹⁶ Prestige, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

¹⁷ See also Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:14; 4:15; 5:8; for the mythical treatment of this truth.

¹⁸ Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

¹⁹ *Soundings*, p. 148. It is difficult to find explicit reference to this in the essay itself; in fact on p. 171 he seems to take pains to avoid saying it.

²⁰ Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

²¹ Prestige, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

what we see perfectly enmanned in Jesus, and that is why it is right to call Jesus God'.²² If challenged presumably they would either spell out this paradox in greater detail or as is often claimed it is so because of the paradox through which Dr. D. M. Baillie expressed the problem.²³ That there is somewhere in this whole question a paradox is not denied, the question which perhaps remains is where the paradox lies? In the Church's formulations, in the New Testament interpretation, or further back in the act of God in Jesus? If there is a 'leap of faith' to be made where is the spot at which take off? Ultimately it would seem that of all that has been outlined here the question of critical exegesis is the crucial one, since theology and philosophy are notoriously subject to fashion and subjectivism. Allowing for a certain subjectivism in critical exegesis, its scientific approach allows for more objectivism and the signs are that at this point we will be subjected to more positive assertions rather than less.²⁴

I would like at this point to highlight the problem as stated by means of an analogy. I am not a logician and it is likely that the analogy is riddled with loopholes. Nevertheless as a representative of simple uncomplicated thinking Jones let me put the following.

Let us make a statement, 'God gives Jesus to Man'. This is a simple statement putting God as the giver and Man as the receiver of Jesus, God's act of loving grace. Let us take a similar statement, 'John gives flowers to Mary', standing for John showing his love towards Mary. The flowers are an expression of John's love and in John's corporeal absence the flowers in a true sense represent John to Mary. For Mary when she looks at the flowers sees, apart from their colour and their beauty and their aroma, John. John can be said to be actualized in the flowers. They represent the love of John, they represent the interiority of John, they are not simply flowers. So in addition to saying, 'John gives flowers to Mary', we can say that this stands for 'John gives himself to Mary'. Now we turn to our first statement again, 'God gives Jesus to Man'. Jesus is an expression of God's love, in a true sense Jesus represents God, in him we see the interiority of God, and Man, when he sees Jesus, visualizes God. We can, therefore, say that the statement 'God gives Jesus to Man' means 'God gives Himself to Man.'

But in the second statement although the flowers in a very real sense are John to Mary, Mary would never or could never point to the flowers and say, 'There is John' in the sense that the flowers have now become completely John or that the flowers are a substitute for John or that the flowers completely represent

²² Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²³ D. M. Baillie, *God was in Christ* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), Ch. V.

²⁴ See also James A. Bergquist, 'Critical Exegesis in the Life of the Indian Churches, Some Professional Perplexities' (paper read at the Society for Biblical Studies, 4th Conference, Bangalore, 1968).

all that John is. If Mary were to take this step she would be accounted a neurotic.

In the first statement although Jesus in a very real sense is God to Man, Man should never point to Jesus and say, 'There is God', in the sense that Jesus has now become completely God or that Jesus is a substitute for God or that Jesus completely represents all that God is. In other words, we cannot use words connoting divinity to Jesus, at least not in an absolute sense, and even to use them in a derived sense is fraught with dangers.

In other words, while the flowers and John are intrinsically joined in the apprehension of Mary, and from the side of John he sees himself intrinsically given in the flowers, John can never lose his identity in the flowers nor can the flowers lose their identity (so to speak) in John. Therefore while Jesus and God are intrinsically joined in the apprehension of Man and from the side of God (if we may be so bold as to speak thus). He sees Himself intrinsically given in Jesus, God should never lose His identity in Jesus, nor should Jesus be seen to lose His identity in God. While intrinsically united God and Jesus should remain distinct.

If it be objected that this analogy is unfortunate or unacceptable because in one of its parts we are juxtapositioning 'flowers' and 'Jesus', i.e. a vegetable and a human being let it be said that choosing any other human being in any other relationship would be equally objectionable and perhaps dangerous, since as flowers can be a unique symbol of love, so Jesus is unique in His relation to God and to Man.

Another analogy can be used which is biblical and that is the God-covenant-Israel analogy. An analogy which is also unique in itself and more so if taken in the light of Isa. 42:6; 49:8, where the Servant (Israel?) is described as given 'as a covenant to the people', i.e. the nations of the world. Whether the Servant is one man or Israel, from the standpoint of Christian faith Jesus is the personification of both the particular Servant and of Israel. If we link these verses with Mk. 14:24, 'This is my blood of the (new) covenant', even allowing for the fact that this is not an original logion of Jesus, but expressing the faith of the Palestinian church,²⁵ taking the God-covenant-Israel motif as the first part of the analogy, strengthens the whole analogy. For we believe that Jesus is the personal embodiment of the new covenant.

Without repeating the whole analogy again, we may say, that while the covenant is a symbol of God's loving grace in the sense that where the covenant is, there is God in their midst (almost literally so in the O.T. tradition which couples the Ark and the covenant), nevertheless the covenant and God are distinct and must not be confused. In fact it was the virtual substitution of covenant or law for God which brought forth Jesus' condemnation

²⁵ Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

of the Pharisees. The analogy of God-covenant-Israel again leads us to the viewpoint that while intrinsically united God and Jesus who is the new covenant remain distinct.

There is, of course, a danger in reducing God's relation with men to an analogy, in fact, no analogy suffices, there is bound to be illogicality in any attempt. It will be alleged that the illogicality lies in the fact that there is a plus element in Jesus which does not answer correctly either to 'flowers' or 'covenant'. But I would suggest that the illogicality lies further back in the faith-judgement that Jesus is in any sense uniquely related to God.²⁶ The 'leap of faith' is not centred on Chalcedon but in the act of God—Jesus. To centre the 'leap of faith' on Chalcedon is to posit the wrong chasm in the wrong place at the wrong time. The chasm lies not in Chalcedon in 451 A.D., nor in Corinth in 50 A.D., but somewhere on the banks of Jordan circa 30 A.D., historically speaking. While historically the Church has tended to centre the paradox of God in Christ at Chalcedon,²⁷ the paradox lies further back in the act of God in Jesus. What I have outlined here far from being the demolition of faith is an attempt to centre faith at the existential point at which we are really challenged. The demand of faith will be no less, in fact, it can be argued that it will be greater rather than less.

Is there any sense, therefore, in which we can accept the ancient formularies, and the apostolic testimony in a way in which, if all that we have been saying is in any sense correct, we can still use them? And what about the Church's tradition of worship against which we seem to be arguing?

The answer may lie in the application of a concept which is near to the heart of Christian faith, and that is the concept of sacrament, and I am indebted to Fr. E. Schillebeeckx for the clue given in his book 'Christ the Sacrament'. I shall not however be using the phrase as used by Fr. Schillebeeckx, in fact, it is purely a jumping-off point for further thought. I would prefer, for instance, to speak of 'Jesus the Sacrament of encounter with God', to adapt Fr. Schillebeeckx's full title. But what do we mean by 'sacrament'? Here I am indebted again to Fr. Schillebeeckx for a definition. 'A sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility.'²⁸ Tillich also dealt with this subject at length and said, 'Any

²⁶ I. Ramsey (*Religious Language*: London, S.C.M., 1957, p. 157) reminds us of the 'logical necessity' proposed by Origen. 'No one can be a father without having a son' (*De Principiis*. I. 2. 10). But if by that he is talking of fatherhood and sonship in a generic sense then we are back again to Tillich's 'distortion'. In fact one could say that in this context fatherhood does not logically necessitate sonship, except as a symbolic relationship.

²⁷ W. R. Mathews, *The Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century* (London, O.U.P., 1950), pp. 23, 24.

²⁸ E. C. F. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963); Stag Books ed., p. 15.

object or event is sacramental in which the transcendent is perceived to be present. Sacramental objects are holy objects, laden with divine power.²⁹ If these statements and Fr. Schillebeeckx's further claim that 'Jesus is the sacramental of encounter with God' are accepted, then we are on the way to an answer to our dilemma. In the objective person and event of Jesus Nazareth we are brought face to face with God's effective power unto salvation. It is, in fact, the same argument as was employed in our earlier analogy, there we were talking sacramentally.

But here we encounter another difficulty which involves one of the historical distinctions between Western Catholicism of the Roman type and Western Protestantism, which we will take to include the Anglican tradition. The distinction is pinpointed by Fr. Schillebeeckx when he goes on to spell out the way in which Jesus is the sacrament of God. 'Because the saving acts of the man Jesus *are performed by a divine person, (italics mine)*, they have a divine power to save, but because this divine power to save appears to us in visible form, the saving activity of Jesus is sacramental.'³⁰ By including the words 'performed by a divine person' Fr. Schillebeeckx has from the Anglican viewpoint demolished the sacramental view which he desires to put forth. If I may use the analogy of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and briefly look at the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, Anglicanism has traditionally avoided definitions, but there is a negative definition included in the XXXIX Articles of Religion of the Church of England. Article XXVIII states, 'Transubstantiation . . . overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament'. Is this mere tendentious polemic born of the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation or is there something more here? I believe there is something more. This Article interpreted means, among other things, that when the material object is completely identified with the object it represents then it has ceased to be a sacrament, for the material object does not lose its inherent properties, and does not change, but becomes a vehicle for the power of the object which it represents, else it loses its *sacramental* significance, as defined by both Fr. Schillebeeckx and Paul Tillich above. To spell it out, if the bread and wine actually become the physical body and blood of our Lord then the whole force of the sacrament is lost, and it has become something else, always assuming that it can become something else. We would say that the bread and wine do not become the physical body and blood of Jesus, but that they become 'as the body and blood'

²⁹ Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 120.

³⁰ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Here we may note Dr. Schillebeeckx's conception of redemption as the divinizing of man by redeeming him (p. 18). Given this view of redemption we are logically bound to posit the divinity of Christ. Protestantism, while refusing to accept this view of redemption, and refusing the concept of transubstantiation and the adoration of the elements, has failed to see the implication of its refusal in relation to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ.

of Jesus to those who receive in faith, by the choice of these symbols by Jesus himself, and their use in a particular environment, viz. the Eucharist. Consequently we are not justified in adoring the elements for this is an extension of the overthrowing of the nature of the sacrament.

Likewise Jesus does not become God because the words and works of Jesus are those of a divine person, but Jesus becomes 'as God' to us by the choice of God of the man Jesus, and the response of obedience by Jesus,³¹ and the acceptance of this by the faithful, within the environment of the expectation of the Messiah as foretold in the O.T. And this to me represents a dominant theme in the N.T., not least in the Johannine Christology. 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). The reason for this is clear: Man's greatest problem in his search for God is his inability to reach God, so 'with sympathetic consideration for the characteristic situation of the human person who, because of his bodily nature, lives in a world of men and things, and reaches spiritual maturity in them and through them, God ever offers us the Kingdom of Heaven in earthly garb'.³² 'The man Jesus, the visible, fully human image of the redeeming God, is . . . the "once-for-all" sacramental sign in which the mystery of the divine redeeming love is visibly represented to us and through which the redeeming God introduces us into existential, personal communion with himself.'³³ On the basis of this we can say that Jesus is 'as God' for us but cannot be God.

But a further difficulty then arises, how was the Church led to worship Jesus, an activity which is reserved to God alone? Are we justified in worshipping Jesus now? What do we do in the sacrament of the eucharist? 'We accept the bread and wine 'as the body and blood of Christ but refuse to say it is the body and blood of Christ in any material sense. Likewise are we not led to the assertion that Jesus is 'as God' for us and remains so until the *eschaton*, for we are still in the state of not being able to reach God except 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'. He remains 'as God' for us until as St. Paul says, 'the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone' (1 Cor. 15:28). We are justified in our adoration of Jesus 'as God' until the *eschaton* when he will also give up his work of mediation between men and God, 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).'

I hope it will be understood that this is not an attempt at an exhaustive study, but that it represents the barely articulate

³¹ Van Buren, *op. cit.*, p. 47 f.; 'A Christology of "Call" and "Response".'

³² Quoted from a condensation of sections of Schillebeeckx's 'Christ the Sacrament' in *A Reader in Contemporary Theology* (London: S.C.M. Press paperback), p. 78.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

groping of one of the faithful. This is not the whole Gospel, but I venture to suggest that it may be along lines similar to this that many of our contemporaries may be led back along the pilgrimage of faith which they have abandoned. I think it is a way, by drawing the line on the human side rather than on the divine side, to revitalize worship and challenge the faithful to more meaningful Christian action. The prevailing docetism in the Church, due in no small measure to the Patristic play-on-words, has an emasculating influence both on worship and Christian behaviour. It has led in India to Jesus being ranged with the *avatars*, thereby robbing us of the challenge to a life of response in obedient suffering, which is the real Gospel challenge to encounter with the living God. I hope this may be a basis for knowing the authentic Jesus in the Church, that others may come to know through the Church.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Rev. Fr. J. B. Chettimattam is on the staff of Dharmaram College, Bangalore.

The Rev. Fr. J. M. Pathrapankal is also on the staff of Dharmaram College.

Dr. W. S. Rhodes is on the staff of Serampore College,

The Rev. D. A. Thomas is joining the staff of the United Theological College, Bangalore.

The Rev. Fr. J. Dupuis is on the staff of St. Mary's College, Kurseong.

Sri Balwant A. M. Paradkar is a Research Assistant on the staff of the C.I.S.R.S., Bangalore.

Fr. P. Fallon works in Calcutta (Santi Sadan, Calcutta 4).

The Rev. Dr. V. P. Thomas is on the staff of Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur.