

# MUST WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?

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# MUST WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?

*"Art Thou the coming One, or must we be looking for an additional One?"*

Whatever you say of this Gospel you cannot call it dull. Anywhere there is dullness in its presentation it is the presenter who is dull. The Christian faith staggers the imagination. It is the most stirring drama that has ever excited man!<sup>1</sup>

At the same time the Christian religion is simple. Sublimely simple. It means one thing:

Eternal Life!

In the midst of Time!

By the strength and under the  
eyes of God!<sup>2</sup>

And, please, Christianity is the only religion with which we now have to deal. No other religion has longer the power to stir.<sup>3</sup>

But at the same time, Christianity is no sacred stock pile of ethical and social purposes for the improvement or even the preservation of matters generally. Those who make what Christianity has done *incidentally* for Western Civilization the main issue create a social gospel,

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<sup>1</sup>See Dorothy Sayer's stimulating *Creed or Chaos*.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*

<sup>3</sup>See Dr. Kenneth S. Latourette's, *The Christian Outlook*.

emasculate the Redeemer's intention,  
and leave the Gospel a witless and  
driveless social anomaly.

It is for Man—not for civilization—that the Gospel is given.  
Wolfgang Goethe once wrote,

“Mankind is always advancing, and Man  
remains always the same.”

It is to *Man* that the Gospel speaks: To Man who in the  
midst of all change and progress himself never changes.

And it speaks of Jesus Christ! No Other! One of Eng-  
land's best<sup>1</sup> once said somewhere that “mankind cannot be  
too often reminded that there was once a man named  
Socrates.” I suppose that is so,

but it is infinitely more important to allow no man to lose  
the knowledge that One named Jesus once stood among us.

“No one who has once absorbed a ray of  
Christ's light can ever again be as though  
he had never heard of him.”<sup>2</sup>

For Christianity has a Founder—

who was Himself what He taught; and it is the concern  
of this pulpit and all pulpits to lead us to steep ourselves  
in Him! That is our chief business.

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<sup>1</sup>John Stuart Mill.

<sup>2</sup>Harnack, *op. cit.*

*Is This He?*

But who has ever understood Him? Men still find  
Jesus hard to grasp.

Jewish scholars,  
sincere truth-searchers,  
half-read experts in comparative religions,  
sophomore agnostics,  
half-converted pilgrims,  
bewildered believers,  
still ask,

*Why Jesus Christ? Is this really He?*

And the general state of affairs in this "Christian" world  
leads some of those who have believed most fully to ask  
again—

Is this really He, must we not look for help  
in another direction, too?

Such questions came in the mind of one very close to Him.

*There is nothing before the Cross more poignantly touch-  
ing than this question of the Baptist when he sent loyal men  
to ask what the prisoner of Herod could not ask in person:*

*Art thou that One  
who would come—  
or must we look for another?  
an additional one?  
one besides?*

John's bewilderment is not hard to understand. For two  
centuries tragedy had piled on tragedy in his land.

Since Antiochus, who said he was Savior, twenty decades  
before, there had been no peace.

The great kingdom of the Maccabees, born in revolt, had  
blown up from its internal violence and outsiders had  
gnawed the remains. The Roman harsh foot was upon every-  
thing. That pretender out of Edom, Herod, had hurt Israel  
in every joint.

As far as human sight could go it looked as if Israel were  
beyond redemption. All the glorious old prophecies sounded  
like dreams—or lies.

Despair ruled—of what possible use an earthly crown or any political possession? Prestige, wealth, effort, devotion, all were empty values.

The only possible hope was for a completely New Kingdom—*Messiah!* But in John's day even this hope was all mixed up:

*The Older Prophets*

spoke, indeed, of a glorious future kingdom—God Himself would come down, destroy enemies, make justice, peace, and joy; then a wise and mighty king of David's house would appear.

But now—some of their interpreters were saying that they meant *Israel* would be Son of David.

*Newer Prophets*

had said Messiah's rule would be world-wide and *so would His Judgment*, for *Diaspora* had widened Jewry's horizon.

*Other Prophets*

were crying for *moral purification*. Now *Moral* responsibility must be met—God must be Holy to those of whom He would demand Holiness.

*Another stream*

of teaching held that *only a remnant* would know Messiah. . . . open profaneness barred the masses—Individual Salvation was becoming a concern!

*Others were saying:*

Earth not a final goal. . . . *Something new from heaven to earth*. . . . transcending all earthly. . . . He with God from the beginning. . . . He will do by super-human means. . . .

but the *older people* still, says Harnack, believed that *God Himself would assume* the sceptre, destroying,  
founding,  
championing,  
and every man would sit under his own fig tree,  
in his own vineyard, eating—  
with his foot,  
on his enemy's neck!

*When Messiah comes!*

All this was in John's background.

If *You* . . . had been told all you life that you were a child  
of promise;  
had been reared in an atmosphere of revolt, and  
revulsion, and longing;

If *You* . . . had found yourself a Mission that would  
not let you go;  
had discovered that God now demanded justice and  
mercy instead of priestly and showy  
ceremonial;

If *You* . . . were convinced that help would come from God  
when men repented;  
had run to the precipice proclaiming Repent!  
and thousands had heard!  
and repented!

If *You* . . . carried a whole parcel of contradicting preach-  
ments about Messiah in your head, but,  
*in spite of that,*  
knew yourself to be His fore-runner,  
and had sounded true and clear,  
and had seen heaven open, and  
a dove descend,  
and light upon Him,  
and if you,  
had *baptized* Him,  
and called Him . . . . . *Lamb of God!*



THIS IS HE!

Jesus sent a simple answer—pregnant with meaning. For centuries men have known of the love of Jesus for John Baptist. Jesus sent him a warm and simple answer.

But, for that matter, this sufficient Christ brought the whole world a Gospel which is much simpler than most churches and all theologians will allow it to be.

His Gospel is a simple Gospel—and for that very reason more stern and more universally applicable. A man cannot evade this sufficient Christ of the simple Gospel on the subterfuge of a misunderstood Christology.

Jesus promised that

*Eternal Life would cut through Time  
by God's grace and mercy;*

but He also said it is

God *or* mammon,  
eternal *or* earthly,  
soul *or* body,  
humility *or* self,  
love *or* selfishness,  
truth *or* lie.

A Man has to make up his mind! It is God and the Eternal for him or it is the world and time.

The Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it had always to do with the Father. He leads men to God

not alone by what He says, John,  
but still more by what he does,  
and most by who He is,  
and ultimately,

*by what He suffers!*

"Come unto Me!" He cries, and when under the travail of His Mission men begin to see that it is by Him that blind, leprous, possessed, and deaf are cured. . . . When they see and note those to whom the Gospel is preached. . . . then will there dawn the New Vision. . . . vision of the glory with which the Father has entrusted Him.

He *is* the way to the Father. . . . "not as mere factor is He connected with the Gospel." He *is* its personal realization and its strength. This He will remain!

But if this Gospel points always to the Father,<sup>1</sup> what do you want with your Christ? He brought nothing new; they say.

I answer with Wellhausen and Harnack.

It is quite true that what Jesus expressed, what John the Baptist had proclaimed before Him, this repentance—gospel, was also in the prophets, and traces can be found even in the Jewry of the time. Without their knowledge the Pharisees had it!

But, unfortunately, they had a lot else!  
With them —

it was all weighted, darkened, distorted, rendered ineffective and deprived of its force by a thousand things they held to be religious and as important as mercy and judgment.

They reduced everything to one dead level. . . .

They had choked the long-opened spring of Holiness with sand and dirt. . . .

They had diverted its waters with the silt  
from a thousand petty laws. . . .  
rubbish the priests and  
theologians had dreamed up!

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<sup>1</sup>In taking advantage of the insights of the great Harnack I have tried never to minimize the Person of Jesus by exclusion in favor of the Father, whom Harnack seems to make altogether central.

Now, *What was New?*

The spring of Holiness had burst forth afresh and had broken a new way for itself through the rubbish.

What was new?

*Purity* was new! And after two thousand years purity is *still* new. Purity was new. . . . And the *Personality* was new.

Mere words are nothing. . . they all had the words, but here was the *Personality of Purity* who could show men the Father,

and that was *brand New!*

And He saw John,  
and heard John,  
and recognized the Fore-runner

and accepted John's repentance-message and preached it Himself—and on the lips of Jesus—John's terrible message became a message of love and joy.

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for  
He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel. . . .*

. . . . .  
*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. . . . And ye shall find rest for your souls.*

THEY—knew God as Tyrant, cursing any omission of ceremonial law in His house.

He—This New Person—breathed in God's presence.

THEY—could find God only in what they called His Law and had dug it into a labyrinth—a prairie-dog warren of dark passages, closed alley-ways, secret entrances.

HE—This New Person—saw and felt Him everywhere and called Him Father.

THEY—had option on the meaning of a thousand of His commandments and assumed therefore they had title to Him as well.

HE—The New One—knew only one commandment.

THEY—had shaped their religion into an earthly trade—destestable!

HE—This New One—was living what had happened to Him,

proclaiming a living Father,  
and my soul's nobility.

What was New? *Purity* was new, and *Personality* was  
new, and the *Proclamation*, the simple proclamation,  
mourning and laughing,  
weeping and dancing,  
wealth and beggars,  
plenty and thirst,  
health and illness,  
children's games and politics,  
sowing and reaping,  
leaving home and  
home-sickness,  
weddings and burials,  
rich houses and graves,  
barren lands and rich farms,  
the lord of the vineyard and  
vines,  
pearl merchants and idle laborers,  
shepherds and lost sheep,  
fishermen with fish,  
women with lost coins and dead sons,  
and issues of blood, and empty pocket  
books,  
bread of heaven, and water in a well,  
food that spoils, stones and serpents,  
ravens and ripe grain, colts and children,  
lilies, sparrows, roof-tops,  
regal glory and a prostitute's tears,  
the tyrant's power-lust and a child's innocence  
five loaves—and two fishes.

In all this every-day simplicity He strikes the mightiest  
notes—He cuts an inexorable alternative,

*He leaves us no escape!*

*This Is He!*

and He says, in effect, "Go and show John once more that *Saving Activity* in the form of *Pure Personality* is here!"

"By my vanquishing misery, need, disease, John, my people, the poor—those who wait for the consolation of Israel—can see a New Day.

This *Saving Activity*, John,  
is the *Seal of the Mission*.

Be strong, dear John!

God is at work among His people—the poor—  
those who have waited for Him!

To them, John, is the message beamed." To these here in Austin who have waited is this hope sent, and to them, before all, is the forgiveness of sin directed which makes possible the Kingdom.

You see, fire is kindled by fire. Personal life can respond best to personal forces. Let us rid ourselves of our dogmatic sophistries that seek to corner Christ for some little Kingdom of our own.

God is master of His own Mercies. He will show mercy where He will.

But history, two thousand years of it, says that it is Jesus, in His Mission to men, who brings the weary and the heavy-laden to the Father.

This, in part, is the message Jesus sent with his heart across the miles to the beloved Baptist.

And then, he thought of his own time of imprisonment and Cross. *As he thought of John's grave He remembered his own* and called the messengers back for a post-script.

"Tell John," He whispers it, "Tell John, happy is that one who doesn't stumble over me."

Thinking of Cross and Death because of the thought of John's bloody grave—His heart sends a deeper word. . . .

John, dear John, you wonder at my method.  
You wonder why I leave you there.

John! *and the heart message rises clear  
and sharp—*John! Listen to me!

*I-can-no-more-come-to-you-than-I-can-  
come-down-from-my-own-cross!*

In the wilderness, I could not turn stones  
to bread, John—

In your death, dear John, I cannot save you  
any more than I can save myself!  
*Not and be true to the Mission!*

Don't stumble over this, John. It's different from what  
you wanted—but so is My Cross. It will be a "scandal" to  
many and they shall stumble.

And stumble they did,  
and so did I,  
and You?

But that grave at which we stumble—it brings another  
post-script which really is the message of Jesus. It says, in  
Dorothy Sayer's<sup>62</sup> thrilling words:<sup>1</sup>

"For whatever reason God chose to make us as we are,  
limited suffering, dying, sinning,  
He took His own Medicine..."

Whatever His purpose for creation and for me,  
He has played the same game and by the same rules.  
For Jesus, son of Joseph (they said), carpenter  
from Nazareth, was,  
"in fact and in truth Son of God in the  
most literal sense."

It was His grave that the Father opened to complete this  
Gospel, and,

"This grave is the birth place of that  
indestructible belief that death is  
vanquished; that

Life is Eternal amidst time!"

It is useless to cite Plato or to point to the Persian  
religion (or to Egypt) or the literature of later Judaism.  
All that is sunk, perished!

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<sup>1</sup>Sayer, *op. cit.*

But the certainty of the resurrection and Life Eternal which is bound up with the grave in Joseph's garden lives. And upon the conviction that Jesus *lives* we still base all our hopes of citizenship in an

Eternal City.

*"He delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."*

Wherever death is terrorless;  
wherever present pain is balanced with  
a future hope of glory;  
wherever life and self are conquered  
it is bound up with the conviction  
that Jesus Christ has passed through death.

That God. . . .

Ours is a strange new world—of progress and retrogression—of emancipation and slavery. Mankind climbs and slips onto a high plateau loaded with his new gadgets, concepts, and philosophies.

It is a new age—an age of Progress—for common men, *we were told once*, and believed it.<sup>1</sup>

In this day, fraught with possibilities, the man of any feeling will gratefully receive the added hours given each day by technology and the added years given by medical science. He will be pleased with the added conveniences that science can devise, and the boons of pleasure that freedom from slavish toil can save for him—

He will take most gratefully all the tokens the development of mankind will bring him.

But inside—where he lives alone—he knows very well that his situation inwardly is unchanged. As Goethe said in

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<sup>1</sup>But See *The Belief in Progress*, Sir John Baillie.

the beginning, "Mankind is always advancing, but Man is always the same! The problems that agitate his own guilt, his own soul, these are not altered by progress—not at all.

He still has to have this Sufficient Jesus—

*Must we look for another?*

In the mid-years of his great powers, speaking extempore to classes of six hundred from all schools of the University of Berlin, Harnack said, and a student took it down,

"Gentlemen, as a man grows older—he does not find, if he possesses any inner world at all, that he is advanced by the external march of things, by the progress of civilization! No—he finds himself where he was before—and is forced to seek the sources of strength which his fathers before him sought.

He is forced to make himself a Native of the Kingdom of God,

the Kingdom of the Eternal,

the Kingdom of Love,

and he comes to understand that *it was only of this kingdom that Jesus wanted to speak—*

and he is grateful to Him for it."

*This Is He! There is no other!*

Let us break bread together  
on our knees—

Let us drink wine together  
on our knees—

Let us praise God together  
on our knees.

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