

The Finality of Christianity.

When Strauss published his famous Life of Jesus in 1835, the whole body of Christian Theologians was struck to its very depths. To think that a man should dare to think, much less to give utterance to the idea that Christianity is based upon mythology, and that the New Testament stories are nothing more or less than a collection of myths and legends, - this brought forth all the fury, all the indignation, all the wrath, all the vindictive vituperation of which the Christian church has been capable. Since that time and ever before the church has been conducting a sullen, defiant and hopeless retreat before the

movement of modern life. With²
fear and trembling the adherents
of to a religion of orthodoxy, authority
have watched the fearless critic
and scientific historian, dissect
and analyze, and sift the materials
history of the church, the ~~Bible~~ Old
Testament, the creeds, the doctrines
one after another. But they held
fast to the conviction that no
work within the three church, and
in the interests of Christianity and
religion itself would dare to
approach the pedestal of the new
testament, and subject the gospel
and of to the same keen searching
analysis, that had been applied
to the books, yet for a hundred
years this has been going on

This book of Prof. Foster, "The Family of Christianity" is one of the important results of this hundred years of work. Its significance rests not alone in the fact that it stands fairly and squarely upon the religious platform of the modern world, and modern thought, but also that Prof. Foster represents the spirit of teaching and training of the large and minority of Chicago, and is identified with the one of the largest and most conservative of other religious bodies of Christians.

Realizing full well the momentousness of the situation, and the real issue which is at stake in the present day controversy in Theology. he subjects the principles of the conflicting tendencies to

scholarly, and keen analysis, and then submits his own position for consideration, stating as frankly as possible that his thesis is "Religion without supernaturalism," and science without materialism." He examines the system of Christianity which bases its claims to absolute verity, and finally upon the objects external objects of faith, such as miracles, the Deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the authority of the creeds, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the atonement, and concludes this examination by declaring that all these things have passed forever from the religious creeds of the modern world. The Bible, the creeds, the doctrines of the

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Ecclesiasticism are the products of religious faith, and as such can not be the ~~knows of religious~~ in causal line qua men of the religious life. If Christianity is just this supernatural religion, and nothing more, then Christianity is failing from our life, never to return, and all claims to belong to church Christian body are — excluded from the life of the modern man.

"In this new world there is no room for the theory of Christianity's exclusiveness supernaturalism, over against which is not God's work but man's; for in this new world the opposition of human and divine is overcome, and all is human and all is divine at one and the same time." all this system is based

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on the primacy of intellect in man.
It is the standpoint of men of soberness
by knowledge, common to orthodoxy,
and rationalism, to new Platonism
and Buddhism, to St. Thomas Aquinas
and Hegel," but in the new world
there is nothing good save the
good will."

Primary of the intellect in man;
the ascetic-contemplative life the
highest life; knowledge the chief
good; dogma, or 'scriptural doctrine,'
the essence of Christianity and
the content of revelation, such con-
tent guaranteed by infallibility
of fofe or book, whose credentials
are necessarily miraculous; saving
faith, first of all holding things
to be true because fofe or book says
so, the finality of the Christian
religion consisting in the miracu-

lously authenticated divinity of
its doctrines.— all this is a piece of
this is all of a piece, and it all
fits into the old Graeco-Roman
world, and Mediaeval world with
its static cosmology, and its static
universe, and hierarchy over the
spirit. The primacy of the will
is won: the practical moral life
the highest life; character the chief
good; ideals the essence of the
Christian religion, and the content
of revelation, which latter is
the history of great souls. and
the soul of history; ideals viewed
teleologically, and not causally;
faith not ascent, but moral action;
the finality of Christianity in its
ideals,— this, too, is all of a piece
and fits into the modern
dynamical and biological world.

Liberationalism in religion and ⁷
Christianity if it is in essence based
on supernaturalism is gone. But
in the great humanistic movement
of which this overthrow of authority
religion is one result, and the
re-establishment of man in the
world is another, the fine question
before the world to-day is whether
this ~~new~~ re-established man shall
be merely a man of sense, or shall
he be a man of spiritual power.
Here we come to face the
great problem of materialistic
naturalism, wherein the high
spiritual ~~for~~ developments of
man are reduced to the level
of natural causes alone. The
disintegrating, demoralizing effect
of the system of thought which

declares that we are what we are⁸
as a result of the sole action of
mechanical laws which have
produced us, without giving
place for the spontaneous action of
a free personality, is as much
to fear be feared, as the equally
depersonalizing supernaturalism.

The conflict between ~~supernatural~~,
~~even~~ religion and science, has
not been one of either a conflict
between supernaturalism and science
and science has been the
victorious party. But owing
to the fact that that the defenders
of religion have based their
stated their whole claim of Christ-
ianity upon the supernatural authority
of Christianity, the natural
result is following, viz. that with

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the overthrow of supernaturalism
the overthrow of Christianity has
been taken for granted. To wrest
~~the Christian~~
the religion from the decaying stand
structure of supernaturalism, and to
and maintain its integrity and
vitality against the dogmatic
assertions of ~~of~~ materialistic dogmatism
is one ~~gerent~~ problem in the intent of
a richer fuller life for man.
This takes us back to the ^{historical} sources of
of Christianity, ~~now~~ as found in
the new testament.

The question immediately arises as
to what the essence of Christianity is.
Is it that which is common to all the
various religious Christian groups. Or is it
the teaching of any one of these groups? Is it
it the ~~only~~ teaching of the new testament?
Is it the teaching of any one of the
gospels. or any portion of the gospels?
Or indeed is there any essence to it

at all.

Difficulties arise as soon as this question presents itself. for when we come to the new testament, we find there a variety of opinions, a conglomeration of tradition, myth, legend, and superimposed statements made in the interests of propaganda by men who wrote from 40 to 70 years after the alleged events are said to have occurred. There is not one word in the four gospels that we can say with certainty was ever uttered by Jesus. These New Testament narratives which are the source of all our historical knowledge about Jesus, are records of opinions about events, at best they represent the second hand translated records of the impressions that the life of a man made upon the the people, who and the successors of the people who gathered about him.

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When we come to find one way through
this mass of material which is clearly
~~seen~~ the accumulations of followers
and out the deposit of Jesus himself
we find it very difficult to find
a common ~~to~~ ground upon which
to stand with Jesus.

If we seek to affiliate himself
ourselves to him on the basis of
the acceptance of his teaching, we
shall find that we have to fast
conform with him at once. He believed
in angels and demons,
which we do not. He believed in
a personal devil which we do not.
He believed in miracles which we
do not. He believed in the peculiar
doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven,
such as the Rebirths of today
believed in, we do not. He
in the doctrine of the messiahship
which we do not. In short he

was the child of his own time 1/12
sharing with them the conceptions
of the world, and the relations
of man to the world which we
have outgrown. Here we can
find no common ground with
Jesus. If his ~~teachings~~ continuance
of religious supremacy, defended
upon such truths and teachings,
we should have to leave him
behind.

Should we seek a common
world ground with him, it
would be difficult. The world
problems of to-day receive no
treatment at his hands. He
has nothing to say upon the
subjects which are among the
worst pressing in modern life.

Indeed all these attempts to seek an 113
intellectual conformativity, based upon
likeness of ideas, ~~for~~ all the modern
attempts to find shelter in a Bible
Christianity, are but survivals of
the old superstitionism. The things
that he said, the thoughts that he
expressed, the doctrines that he
preached, these are not the abiding
but the transient in his life. Not
in spite of the fact that we do not
believe as he did, or do not accept
his specific teachings as true, but
because of this diversity of opinion
we come nearer to the man who
lived 1900 years ago, and left such
a tremendous impression upon the
people. The foundation of Christianity
is Jesus, but the essence of the
life of Jesus is not in words or
deeds as such, not in alleged

miracles, or claims to messiahship
but in the personality of the man
who said the things, and did the
deeds, and about whom the myths
and legends collected.

True he finds, and we find the
basis of our faith, not in ~~fact~~^{word},
not in deed, not in doctrine,
not in any ~~extreme~~^{extreme} objection~~s~~^{point},
of faith but in the welling up
within us of the spontaneous
power of personality. In this
that power which is the culmina-
tion of our life, that expresses itself
in the ceaseless activities of man.
Jesus significance as a religious
leader is found in this that those
powers of love, those deep human
sympathies, those eternal hopes, the
great exuding power of love
and human fellowship. There

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sinner things of the spiritual purity
he wore the angel borer of his regulating principle of life. When he faced the mystery of the world, the mystery of life, of growth, of self consciousness of love, of hope, of aspiration, when he faced the eternal mystery which we call God, he felt his relation - ship to this mystery, felt its all penetrating power, felt its dominion over it, and said father. Out of this ^{true} heart of Jesus, this heart now purified by living in the very presence of the unseen, absorbing its power absorbing its righteousness and cleanness, formed forth wreaths of love and deeds of tenderness, just as the power of life in nature is bursting into leaf and flower. But the leaf and flower fade, but the spirit of life is abiding.

the word and deed of Jesus every
far away, as the changing seasons
of war succeed each other, but the
spirit of his life, the power of
his personality, the soul drinking
and absorbing the spirit of God
the Father, and transforming it
into human kincheen, and human
love, this is eternal, and abiding.
In this rests the fitness of the
religion of Jesus, not the quantity
of his speculative truth, not indeed
the infallibility of his utterance,
but strong noble free power of
his personality, willing to do
the will of God, the Father, - this
Thus we arrive at the essential
power of the son of Joseph and marry
who has left such an imprint
upon the history of the world.

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Christianity, the religion of which he
is the founder, becomes not a religion
of a book, not a religion of a creed,
not a religion of doctrine, not a
religion of texts, and sayings of Jesus.
but a religion of personality. The
~~object~~ external object of faith does not
exist, the religious faith is inward,
and expresses its inward force by
stamping the world with its impress.
So Christianity is a religion in which
we ~~wrote~~ are religious, not
because we read a Bible, but we
write a Bible, because of the inner
power of our personality. We are
not the doers of good deeds, and
the liners of the noble life, not
because some book or clericus
or what not tells us so, but
because we are dominated by
the force of some ideal.

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This religion of personality, this religion of Jesus, this true Christianity is replacing the the strumming structure of supernaturalism, and supplementing, and giving life to mechanical infernal system of materialistic ~~supernatural~~ naturalism in our modern life.

As we face the problems before us, the problems of god, and evil, the problems of life, and death, the problems of world and social life, our great ~~problem~~ ^{hope} is not whether our God is ~~not~~ ^{tot} won, or another, or like God, but whether God is much rather that God is like won. Could we know that the great infinite power of the world in which we live, the source of all our power, our strength our

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love, our aspiration, be like the tender
loving forgiving Jesus of Nazareth
our life would be freed from all
its doleful uncertainties. This
was the religious faith of Jesus, the
well spring of his life. This
is and must be our religious
faith, the well spring of our life.
Our fellowship with Jesus, our fellow-
ship in Christianity is in no way
determined by our assent or dissent
of the dogmas of ecclesiasticism,
nor by our assent to or dissent
from the teachings of Jesus. Our
fellowship with Jesus, our fellow-
ship in Christianity is determined
by the extent to which the spirit, the
standpoint of our life is like the
spirit the standpoint of his life.
The disposition which Jesus had
in his world we should have in
ours, viz. the will to follow as

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of the righteous, and noble life in which the rule of love shall be supreme. This at least is the religion of Jesus, and if Christianity is the religion of Jesus, and not a religion about Jesus, then Christianity must be a religion of personality. Its finality is not exclusive, indeed it is not at all quantitative, but it is qualitative. It is the way by which men may enter into the richest and deepest experiences of life, and face the hardest problem, the deepest sorrow, the most cruel disappointments with the calm and resolution that characterised Jesus the ~~life~~ what we know of the life, and the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

I fling of the crumbling
mechanism of Reformation