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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AS A TEACHER: DOES INCARNATION INVOLVE FALLIBILITY ?

THERE are certain elements in the teaching of Christ that are distasteful to the modern mind, and are distasteful even to many who would call themselves Christians, and it has been customary to invoke the aid of a Kenosis theory to make it possible for the professed Christian to accept such teaching as he likes and to reject what he dislikes. It is maintained that when the Son of God humbled Himself and became Man, He of necessity (to be really human) took upon Himself human fallibility. Thus a Christian may accept the Golden Rule as being God-given teaching and yet reject Christ's eschatology or His views on the Old Testament, if he finds these latter unacceptable—He is then speaking simply as a man, and His views are no more than the ordinary views of a first-century Jew.

It is obvious on the face of it that we are here confronted by an issue of great importance. Is the Christian to submit to the authority of Christ's teaching in humility and confidence, or has he to embark on the perilous course of submitting every statement of Christ to the tribunal of his own admittedly fallible judgment ? If the latter is the case, Christians will be relieved of the necessity of accepting and proclaiming what the modern mind finds distasteful, but at the same time they will forfeit the possibility of unity and certainty and spiritual aggressiveness. If the former is the case, they will assuredly find themselves with a theology that is neither fashionable nor popular, but they will find a basis for a united and confident militant Christianity. It is our purpose, starting with the assumption of the fact of the Incarnation—an assumption acceptable to all Christians—to discover whether Incarnation did or did not render our Lord fallible.

The psychological problem presented by belief in the Incarnation is a most baffling one. It seems wholly incongruous to imagine that Jesus had the fulness of Divine knowledge throughout His whole incarnate life. If the baby in Mary's arms was omniscient, He surely was not human—it was a

piece of play-acting on God's part. And in His active ministry, were His apparently genuine requests for information really quite unnecessary? Added to this we have at least one plain statement attributed to Him expressing His ignorance regarding an event in the future (Mark xiii. 32). These facts, together with what some regard as deficiencies in His teaching, have led many to believe that the Incarnation by its very nature inevitably carried with it human fallibility; in becoming man Jesus emptied Himself of His divine omniscience and divine inerrancy. If this is the case it is unsafe to build any solid body of doctrine upon His teaching. What seems to be absolutely central to His teaching and does not conflict with modern knowledge and modern sentiment may possibly be regarded as revelation, but the limits of such revelation must necessarily be tentative and must be determined by the judgment of the individual. It would certainly be unsafe to base a doctrine of scripture on our Lord's attitude to the Old Testament.

On the other hand there are those to whom the very idea that God Incarnate could teach error seems incredible; to them an assertion of our Lord's fallibility seems to deprive Him of His divine qualities and to rob His teaching of *all* effective authority. It is just as impossible, they argue, to affirm *a priori* that a unique event like the Incarnation *must* involve fallibility, as it is to insist that the partaking of human nature *must* carry with it proneness to sin. Thus there are two schools of thought fundamentally opposed to each other on this most pivotal of all theological controversies. How can we decide between the two?

As long as the controversy remains a bandying of different dogmatic concepts, and the decision depends on individual judgment, it can never be satisfactorily settled. The arguments are too abstract to give either side solid assurance as to the conclusions reached. It is our contention that only by coming down to the concrete facts of history and carefully examining our Lord's own statements concerning the authority of His teaching, is there hope of reaching an assured conclusion. For surely it is reasonable to believe that in whatever else He might have been mistaken He could not have been God Incarnate and yet been unaware of the limitations which the Incarnation had put upon His deity. He could scarcely have spoken as though He were omniscient if His knowledge had been limited. He could not have spoken as if His teaching were inerrant if

He had been liable to mistakes. The question is, Have we sufficient data of sound historical worth to determine accurately our Lord's own views ?

I

Obviously we cannot at this stage assume any form of Inspiration for the Biblical documents—to base a theory of Inspiration on the authority of Christ and to base the authority of Christ on the Inspiration of the Bible would be arguing in a circle. It might seem, then, at first sight that many complex questions of criticism require solution before we can arrive at reliable conclusions. Must not the Synoptic Problem and the questions raised by Form Criticism first be settled before we can regard the testimony of the Synoptic gospels as valid ? And as far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned, must we not effect a revolution in Johannine criticism before it can be regarded as of any value as a witness to the life and teaching of our Lord ? With these problems unsolved, is not historical investigation at an impasse and further progress rendered impossible ? On the contrary, we submit that there is a very simple way out of the impasse, which, without begging any of these controversial questions, will commend itself to the convinced Christian. We believe that scholars generally, over-occupied with the minutiae of criticism, have failed to recognise the simple fact that the major questions concerning the content of Christ's teaching may be decided quite independently of the detailed discussion. *We contend that it is sufficient for our argument merely that we be satisfied that the delineation of Jesus in the gospels is substantially true.*

If the gospels are substantially true we may not be certain that any one particular saying is accurately recorded or that any particular incident is truly narrated, yet we may be perfectly sure that any element of our Lord's teaching or any trait of His character which is delineated repeatedly was genuinely derived from the historical Jesus. The argument has particular force if it is found in every stratum of the gospel narratives. Without committing ourselves to any particular Synoptic theory, it obviously gives cumulative force to an argument for the historicity of any element in the gospel narrative if we can show that it occurs, not only in each gospel, but in each stratum within each gospel. That is to say, if Matthew and Luke bear witness to

what is recorded by Mark, not only in those places where their record is closely similar to that of Mark (for here the records might reasonably be suspected of coming from a common source), but in passages peculiar to Matthew and peculiar to Luke and also in the so-called Q material (common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark), we have four witnesses instead of one. Any element which comes in all the four Synoptic strata will have to be regarded as certainly derived from the historical Jesus. (The testimony of the Fourth Gospel, of course, is not to be ignored, but as a concession to modern critical opinion, we shall keep Synoptic and Johannine testimony separate. The debate as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel is by no means over and to some of us it seems that both the internal and the external evidence in favour of the traditional authorship is given far too little weight. If the Fourth Gospel is in origin an attempt by the Apostle John to give a sober account of certain aspects of our Lord's life and teaching as a supplement to the Synoptic tradition, he then becomes a witness of first-class importance.)

Now, of course, there are those who deny that we can have any such certainty as to the substantial truth of the gospel records. R. H. Lightfoot, for instance, in his Bampton Lectures, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, ends as follows (p. 225):

It seems, then, that the form of the earthly no less than of the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice; we can trace in them but the outskirts of his ways.

And there are many who find the real source of the gospel narratives, not in the historical Jesus, but in what they politely call the "creative imagination" of the Early Church. At the beginning of the century E. F. Scott could say of the author of the Fourth Gospel:

The Greek ideas which John employs never correspond more than partially with the ideas of Jesus, and are sometimes alien to the whole spirit of His teaching.¹

In other words, he maintained that John had not portrayed substantial truth but substantial error when professing to depict our Lord's teaching. He allowed dogmatic bias to distort the historical facts. This severe judgment, which used to be reserved only for the Fourth Gospel, is now freely passed upon all the

¹ *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, p. 7.

gospels. All are recognised to have a dogmatic standpoint, and since this standpoint is regarded as false, it serves as a bias which systematically obscures and distorts the narrative as a record of the Jesus of history. In other words, we have not merely errors of detail in the gospels, but such a systematic invention of narrative and teaching that the real Jesus is effectually concealed from any reader of the gospels who is unacquainted with modern critical technique.

The trouble with such a radical verdict is that it proves too much. Though the learned scholar may convince himself that he knows practically nothing about the Jesus of history, he will be quite unable to convince a devout and unlearned Christian that *he* knows nothing about the Jesus of history. The portrait of Jesus in the gospels bears upon its very face the stamp of truth. No writer of fiction ever got near to producing a character of such perfection and balance. Is it credible that the "creative imagination" of the Early Church could have produced such a masterpiece? To believe that the Jesus of the gospels was invented by the Early Church demands the acceptance of a miracle of composition less explicable than any miracle recorded in the gospel narratives. No! We simply refuse to be browbeaten by the technicalities of a learning which cannot see the wood for the trees. Here and there a tree may be faulty, but we cannot deny the plain evidence that the wood itself is in a very healthy and flourishing condition. The Jesus of the Liberal reconstruction, who was merely an ethical teacher, could only be created by arbitrarily isolating certain of the gospel passages and interpreting them out of relation to their context. Schweitzer's reconstruction was equally arbitrary and one-sided. We are left with the alternatives—*either* of professing almost complete agnosticism with regard to the Jesus of history, *or* of taking the general picture of the gospels, with all its diverse elements, as true. The Christian, be he learned or unlearned, recognises upon the gospels the stamp of truth and has the best of reasons for choosing the latter. (We may perhaps at this stage reserve our judgment upon the Fourth Gospel, but even in this case it is well to remember that the ordinary unsophisticated Christian, while noticing differences in Synoptic and Johannine presentation, does not in the least feel that a different and alien figure is being presented to him when he hears the Fourth Gospel read.) So then at least we may take the Synoptic records as

substantially true and use the Johannine records as valuable confirmatory evidence.

But so to take the records leads at once to most important results. It means that every element that figures prominently and repeatedly in the gospels must be derived from the historical Jesus. Thus, for example, it is evident that Jesus was an itinerant preacher and teacher, that He wrought cures upon the sick and performed other miracles, that He selected and trained a band of disciples. His teaching included both the profoundest ethics and the most vigorous eschatology. Judgment—with its inevitable and eternal separation of good and evil—occupied a prominent place in His teaching, which is always insistent both on the love and the severity of God. The topic of “The Kingdom” was another central theme. His method of teaching included frequent use of parable and aphorism and great freedom in using illustrations from nature and everyday life. He delighted to use the title “Son of Man” as a self-designation, which title is faithfully preserved by the Evangelists although it is practically never used by the New Testament and early Christian writers except as put upon the lips of Christ. In dealing with those who sought His help He demanded of them “faith” if they would be healed and saved. These are all elements occurring repeatedly in the gospels,¹ and so must be derived from the historical Jesus, if the gospels are substantially true.

II

With our method of approach now clear we can proceed to tackle our main problem: Have we sufficient data to discover whether our Lord regarded the Incarnation to have imposed any limitation (*a*) upon the extent of His knowledge and (*b*) upon the authority of His teaching? The two questions must be carefully distinguished, since failure to do so has been a frequent cause of confusion. It is often assumed that a denial by our Lord of omniscience involves a denial of His inerrancy, and that because the one can be proved, the other necessarily follows. But it does not necessarily follow. A student may well have disclaimed mathematical omniscience and yet have completed a mathematical examination paper without error. That

¹ Interestingly enough all appear in the Fourth Gospel as well as in the Synoptics, even straightforward eschatology not excluded (e.g. xiv. 3; xxi. 22, 23).

is to say, in a certain limited field and over a certain limited period of time, he expressed himself without error. Similarly it is possible that in the limited fields covered by His teaching and over the limited period of His ministry, our Lord taught without error, even though in His incarnate state He was not omniscient. I think there can be little doubt that we have a sufficient number of clear references to give us an accurate view of His teaching on both questions. Let us examine the evidence, dealing first with the question of omniscience and then with that of inerrancy.

The question of omniscience is easily disposed of—it seems evident that in His incarnate state our Lord was not omniscient. As a child He “grew in wisdom” (Luke ii. 52) and there is no evidence that at any stage in His career He was suddenly granted completeness of knowledge. It would seem that on occasions He asked questions simply for the sake of gaining information. On this matter it is not possible to speak with certainty because it is highly probable that He would have often asked questions even if He had been omniscient. Any good teacher will make a practice of asking questions even though he knows the answers perfectly well. But His “How many loaves have ye?” (Mark vi. 38), “What is thy name?” (Mark v. 19), “Who touched my garments?” (Mark v. 30), “How long has he been like this?” (Mark ix. 21) seem most natural as spontaneous questions. Perhaps the incident of the fig-tree is meant to imply genuine ignorance as to whether there was any fruit there or not (Mark xi. 13). However, the one decisive reference is in the Mount of Olives discourse where He expressly repudiates knowledge of the time of the Second Advent (Matt. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32). Though this is the only recorded denial of omniscience by our Lord in the course of His ministry, its evidential value must be rated very high. It is scarcely the sort of saying that the Early Church would have invented, and it is not the sort of saying to be lightly put on one side by those who take a low view of the historical value of the gospels—it is too valuable as evidence of our Lord’s limitations! This saying, together with the confirmation provided by the other evidence cited, seems sufficient justification for denial of our Lord’s omniscience.

But what of the authority of the teaching He did give? What weight would He have us put upon His words? A cursory

reading of the gospels shows at once that whatever limitations the Incarnation put upon His teaching, it did not put superhuman knowledge beyond His reach. The account of the miraculous draught of fishes in Luke v. 4 (and probably also that in John xxi. 6) is meant to show the exercise of something more than shrewd guess-work by our Lord. It was a case where expert fishermen did not expect to find fish, but Jesus *knew* they would. All four gospels record the prophecy of the threefold denial of Peter. Matthew records the incident about the coin to be found in the fish's mouth (xvii. 37). John iv. 18 relates our Lord's knowledge of the Samaritan woman's husbands. But perhaps more striking still are His statements about the more distant future. He frequently looks forward, knowing (at least in outline) the course of His Passion, Death and Resurrection (e.g. Mark viii. 31 ; ix. 31). He speaks with the utmost confidence of the Destruction of Jerusalem and His Parousia and of the happenings connected with these events (see Matt. xxiv; Mark xiii; Luke xxi). He speaks with authority about the Judgment and the Life to Come (e.g. the parables of the Wheat and Tares, of the Sheep and the Goats, and of Dives and Lazarus). In the famous " Q " saying of Matt. xi. 27 and Luke x. 22 He claims, and claims for Himself alone, the power to reveal the Father to men.

Now it is true that, except in the last-mentioned instance, such supernatural knowledge is not different in kind from that ascribed to the prophets of the Old and New Testaments, and cannot be used in itself as an argument for our Lord's deity; but it can and must be used as evidence for the superhuman knowledge of the Man Christ Jesus. It effectively silences those who argue *a priori* that the Incarnation limits Jesus to purely human powers.

But we must go a stage further. Granted that Jesus had superhuman knowledge on occasions, can we take the next step and claim for Him such a degree of divine direction in His teaching that on all occasions He taught divine truth unvitiated by human error? Here again I think we are undoubtedly justified in making this claim on the strength of our Lord's own statements.

His statements bearing specifically on His authority as a teacher are in themselves remarkable enough, but to feel their full force it is necessary to make a digression and consider His

authority in its wider aspects—for His statements gain their force from the things He did and the life He lived. His claims unsupported by greatness of deed and greatness of character would be valueless ; but backed by acts of unexampled power and by a life of unexampled goodness, those claims are irresistible. If therefore we can remind ourselves of His miracles, ponder the perfection of His character, listen to the stream of momentous claims which fell from His lips, and, finally, recall His resurrection from the grave, we shall then be in a position to assess the real significance of His claims as a teacher. This teacher had power over Nature, over illness, over death, over demon forces. This teacher was one in whom His very enemies could find no fault. This teacher behaved in a manner which His contemporaries could only regard as constituting a claim to deity. Unlike the prophets His teaching was ego-centric ; whereas they pointed away from themselves to the LORD whom they represented, He pointed to Himself as an object of faith. The claims implied by the actions of Jesus could only have struck a thoughtful Jew with horror. The trials of the Captivity and of the Maccabean struggle had burnt into the Jewish soul an unquenchable loathing of idolatry and of polytheism in all its forms. The Jew knew that there was only one God and that no man might usurp His prerogatives. God alone might be worshipped ; God alone could forgive sins ; God's dignity was infinitely far removed from the dignity of the highest of the sons of men. Yet this Jesus demanded the unconditional obedience of his fellow-men, even to the extent of "hating" father and mother for His sake ! He allowed them to prostrate themselves before Him in worship ! He claimed authority to forgive sins ! He set himself forth as the final judge of all mankind ! In very truth He "made himself equal with God" ! Then to crown it all, as a divine seal upon His claims, came His rising from the dead. It is with these claims ringing in our ears and this witness of life and work and resurrection in our minds that we must proceed to an examination of our Lord's own statements regarding His authority as a teacher.

III

Of his direct statements, we find the four or five most important Synoptic references well distributed through the

various strata. All three gospels and three of the four underlying groups of material are represented—there is Q material and material from Mark, and a passage in the material peculiar to Matthew. Notice first of all the saying of Matt. xxiv. 35, Mark xiii. 31, and Luke xxi. 33: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away." The form of the second part of the saying is emphatic, making the whole statement about as strong as one could conceive: "The most durable things of Time shall pass away, but My words—the eternal truth of God—shall never pass away." This saying is particularly interesting because in Matthew and Mark it is placed in immediate juxtaposition to the saying about our Lord's ignorance of the time of His advent, and the one serves to intensify the other by contrast. It is a strange and unexpected thing that *even the Son* should not know about this matter. His teaching was always with complete assurance and commanding authority and often He had shown knowledge of the future, but here is something hidden from Him. This confession was in such marked contrast to His normal manner that both the evangelists record it. Its very mention heightens the implicit authority of all His other unqualified statements. All this is latent in the "not even the Son", but, as if to avoid all misunderstanding, the saying is prefaced by an express statement of the eternal truth of His words.

Next let us consider the famous section of the Sermon on the Mount (a passage largely peculiar to Matthew) in which our Lord's sayings are contrasted with what was said *τοῖς ἀρχαίοις* (Matt. v. 17-48). He uses the language of loftiest authority, "It was said . . . but I say . . ." Now this passage is often construed by superficial readers as being a repudiation of the "barbarous" ethic of the Old Testament and a replacement of it by a new and contrasted Christian ethic. It is suggested that Jesus is declaring the teaching of the Old Testament to be fundamentally wrong and that He is putting a new and true doctrine in its place. If this were a correct interpretation it would be remarkable enough as claim to authority as a teacher, but in fact it is quite mistaken. He makes, if possible, an even higher claim. He deliberately sets the Old Testament on the highest pinnacle of authority and then proceeds to set Himself above it. He introduces the passage with the following words:

“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

What our Lord does, is not to negative any of the Old Testament commands, but to show their full scope and to strip off current misinterpretations of them. Our Lord evidently did not Himself make it clear to His disciples that He intended the abrogation of Levitical sacrifices and all the paraphernalia of Temple worship. It was left to St. Paul to bring into clear light the implications of His teaching and (even more important than His teaching) of His death and resurrection. It is certainly not to the Sermon on the Mount that we are to look for an abrogation of the Old Testament. Our Lord does not say “The Old Testament says, Thou shalt do no murder. But the Old Testament is wrong: I say, Thou mayest commit murder”. Of course that is absurd. What He does teach is that God does not restrict the commandment to the mere letter of the law, but that He disapproves of the hating spirit which leads to murder. Similarly, He did not teach that henceforth His disciples might commit adultery; He taught that lustful intentions were in God’s sight equivalent to adultery. Even His repudiation of the “eye for an eye” principle, which comes from the Old Testament, cannot fairly be said to be a repudiation of what in its context the Old Testament taught. In Ex. xxi. 24, Lev. xxiv. 20 and Deut. xix. 21 we have laws given for the administration of public justice. The practice of private revenge and family feud was to be replaced by strictly fair and impartial public administration of justice. In our Lord’s day this excellent, if stern, principle of judicial retribution was being utilised as an excuse for the very thing that it was instituted to abolish, namely personal revenge. Our Lord gives no hint that He wishes to see the magistrate relaxing his important social function of witnessing to the majesty of Law and to the sanctity of justice, but He does discourage His disciples from appealing to justice when it is for the merely selfish purpose of gaining their own rights. His final contrast again repudiates a misinterpretation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament had given the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour”.

This had been misinterpreted as involving the corollary, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy". But of course in making this addition, which is not a quotation from the Old Testament, the popular teaching was giving it a meaning which is not implied in the context. Lev. xix. 18 was a command originally intended to embrace every member of the Israelite community, and the rest of the verse makes it clear that an Israelite was not to seek for vengeance or harbour grudges against any of his compatriots. "Love thy neighbour" in the Levitical rule already implied "Love your enemies", so that our Lord's command is simply an extension to all mankind of instructions first given to a limited community.

Thus it is against the background of His introductory remarks on the jot-and-tittle inviolability of the law and the prophets that we have to understand our Lord's "I say unto you . . ." Indeed it is against the background of His whole attitude to the Old Testament that we must place these sayings if we are to gain their full force, for Matt. v. 17-19 is no isolated passage. He consistently and repeatedly treats the Scriptures as though they were God's Word written. Yet, despite this, He claims that in a certain sense His teaching supersedes them. His words carry all the authority of God's words so that He can, for instance, revoke the permission for writing a bill of divorcement which the law of Moses had allowed (Matt. v. 31; xix. 9). It should be noticed, furthermore, that He delivered this teaching in His own right. There is none of the Pentateuchal "The LORD spake unto . . .", or the prophetic "Thus saith the LORD"; He simply says, "I say unto you". To a Jewish audience the implication was clear: He was either speaking as God or He was blaspheming.

Our next reference is to be found in the Q passage which forms the conclusion and climax to the whole Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vii. 24-26). Jesus has been speaking of the issues of the final judgment, of those who would and of those who would not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He concludes with a striking simile in which He shows that a man's very destiny is governed by his attitude to Christ's words :

"Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. . . . And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand."

Another passage bringing out the tremendous issues involved in the hearer's manner of response to our Lord's teaching is the interpretation of the parable of the Sower, recorded by all three evangelists (Matt. xiii. 3-23 ; Mark iv. 3-20; Luke viii. 5-15). Here the "word" is clearly the message He has been proclaiming to them. It is God's Word and thus carries with it the alternative of life or judgment. In Matthew it is prefaced by a short but notable Q section, which reinforces the testimony to the significance of His words:

"Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not."

Finally, perhaps we should include among the direct Synoptic statements the Q passage previously mentioned in which our Lord gives thanks for the Father's concealment of truth from the wise and prudent and His revelation to babes (Matt. xi. 25; Luke x. 21). He says: "All things have been delivered unto me by My Father" and He claims that to Himself alone is given the right of granting this revelation to men. While it is rash to deduce much from so difficult a passage, it seems to suggest that He had free access to knowledge hidden in the Father. Also the similarity of its language to that of the Fourth Gospel serves to show that the characteristic language of the latter is not without parallel in the Synoptists and therefore is not to be hastily written off as the creation of the evangelist.

IV

We need only deal with the Fourth Gospel briefly, because our Lord's teaching as there recorded is precisely the same as that of the Synoptists, though the references are more abundant. The two main points are clear—His teaching and His words are the teaching and the words of God; and upon a man's response to His Word depends eternal life. We shall content ourselves with citing some of the more important statements:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life" (v. 23 f.). "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (vi. 63). "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? . . . My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willet to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (vii. 15-17). "He that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world . . . as

the Father taught me, I speak these things" (viii. 26-28). "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God" (viii. 40). "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God" (viii. 46 f.). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death" (viii. 51). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak" (xii. 48-50). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (xv. 7). "All things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you" (xv. 15). "The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them" (xvii. 8). "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (xviii. 37).

Besides the direct statements of our Lord we need also to add the evidence of His whole manner and attitude. Our gospel-writers are all impressed by the sense of authority with which He spoke, which made a deep impression on the crowd. It is true that any great teacher will speak with authority, but the authority of Jesus is quite peculiarly unqualified. The greatest human teacher is humbly conscious of his own fallibility and ignorance; at times his statements are tentative, his predictions are always cautious, and (if he is really great) he will at times confess his errors. But with Jesus there is no trace of this. His statements are never tentative; His predictions are made with unqualified confidence; there is no sign of the slightest confession of error in anything He taught. Without any qualification His teaching is the teaching of God.

Thus our conclusion is, that Christ was not omniscient, but His teaching was wholly true. These are the great positive facts which a Christian must firmly hold if he accepts the authority of Christ. Whatever psychological difficulties may be raised when we try to understand how a person could be inerrant without having omniscience, it is evident that these difficulties are of precisely the same kind as those raised by the phrase "tempted . . . yet without sin". It is impossible to understand how temptation could be real to one who had no sinful tendencies to which temptation could appeal. But these are only such problems as the Incarnation must be expected to raise, and just as Christians believe that our Lord was both sinless and tempted, so we must believe that He was both inerrant and limited in knowledge. So the evidence of the gospels makes it clear that what-

ever effects we allow as a result of the Son's Self-Emptying, we cannot submit to the authority of Christ and at the same time allow any qualification of His claim to be the teacher of the very truth of God. However drastic the implications with regard to our view of the Old Testament, of eschatology, or of any other matter referred to by Christ, let all Christians hold fast uncompromisingly to His authority. Our confidence will not be misplaced and we shall find ourselves assured, united and reinvigorated in the mighty task of evangelising the world.

Royal Air Force.

J. W. WENHAM.