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Vinced that this skepticism of scholars and cheap humor of the laity can by no means prevent the revelation of God. *{}^{17}

Others doctrines such as a supernatural plan of salvation, the Trinity, the substitutionary theory of the atonement, and the second coming of Christ are all quite prominent in fundamentalist thinking. Such are the views of the fundamentalist and they reveal that he is oppose to theological adaptation to social and cultural change. He sees a progressive scientific age as a retrogressive spiritual age. Amid change all around he was \{is\} willing to preserve certain ancient ideas even though they are contrary to science.

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17. Soares, Three Typical Beliefs, p. 54: "The skepticism of scholars and the cheap humor of the laity cannot annul the revelation of God, who has warned us that this evil being is our enemy, from whom we can be saved only by divine power."

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

"Six Talks in Outline"

[13 September—23 November 1949]

(Chester, Pa.)

For the course Christian Theology for Today, Davis required his students to submit outlines for six talks based on William Newton Clarke's An Outline of Christian Theology. \(^\) King reproduces Clarke's outline in condensed form in most of these talks, but in the third and fourth, "Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?" and "What Did Jesus Achieve Through His Life and Death?" he deviates from Clarke's

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1. William Newton Clarke (1841–1912) was a liberal Baptist theologian. From 1883 to 1887, he was professor of New Testament interpretation at Toronto Baptist College; from 1890 to 1908, he was professor of Christian theology at Colgate University. From 1908 until his death in 1912, he was professor of Christian ethics at Colgate. Clarke's An Outline of Christian Theology (1898) was an essential text of liberal American Protestant thought.
interpretations of the life of Jesus. In emphasizing Jesus' firm roots in the Judaic tradition and expanding on his method of teaching, King presents a portrait of a man working for change within the Judaic tradition rather than radically departing from it. Davis gave the paper a B+ and commented: "Your outlines are clear and progressive. I think you will find them useful. Aim at illustrations from life."

"The Character of the Christian God"

The Character of God

I. The Christian Conception of God.
In order to get at the character of God we will discuss the overall Christian conception of God.

A. The Definition of God.—
God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who in love creates, sustains, and orders all.
The essential matters covered by this statement;—
(1) The nature of God: He is a personal spirit.
(2) The character of God: He is perfectly good.
(3) The relation of God to all other existence: He creates, sustains, and orders all.
(4) The motive of God in his relation to all other existence: His motive is holy love.

B. The Nature of God.—"God is the personal spirit."
(1) Spirit—
   a. Greek view—By spirit the Greeks meant that which was invisible, incorporeal etc. In other words their view was philosophical.
   b. Christian view—The early Christians conceived of spirit as meaning that man could have spiritual fellowship with God. It meant that spirit could meet spirit. This was a practical view.
(2) Personal—The word "Personal" in this definition asserts self-consciousness and self-direction in God.

C. The Character of God.—"God is the personal spirit, perfectly good."
(1) The definition "perfectly good" attributes to God all possible excellence. The use of the word good in this context goes beyond its use in popular venacular-kind or gracious. Here it reaches its acme, and stands for the highest that the human mind can conceive.
(2) The goodness of God must not be confused with the goodness of man—the former is absolute and the latter is relative. Indeed the word "good" means the same in both cases, except for God it reaches its highest expression. When the highest conception of good that man can conceive has been set in his mind, it will be found that God corresponds to that conception, and yet he transcends it.
D. The Relation of God to other existence.—God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who . . . creates, sustains, and orders all.

(1) Who creates all—The assertion is that the good personal spirit lies back of the universe as the ground of its being.

(2) Who sustains all—Here it is asserted that he who is the original cause is also the perpetual cause, the upholder of all things, who preserves them in existence.

(3) Who orders all—Here it is asserted that he who creates and sustains the universe is also governing it, and directing it to an end.

E. The motive of God in his relation to other existence.—“God . . . in Holy love creates sustains, and orders all.”

(1) In Holy Love—Through Christ there has come to us a knowledge of the motive of God. The definition asserts that the motive of God in the universe is holy love. From Christ we learn that “God is Love.”

(2) Holy love is a combination of perfect goodness and immeasurable self-giving. Such holy love, our definition asserts, being the substance of his character, is the motive of God’s activity in relation to other existence.

“The Nature of Man———”

I. Man is an animal.

Man is properly a part of animated nature, and cannot disown his kinship with the earth and the creatures that live upon it. No one can doubt the fact that the organization of man’s body resembles the bodies of animals in general.

A. The career of the body.—

(1) Man’s body is clearly part of the natural world.

(2) The body is immediately dependent on innumerable phases of its environment.

(3) Upon the breakdown of the body, which is called death, the body eventually loses its complex structure and returns to the dust.

B. Our knowledge of the body.—

(1) There is much about the body which is not yet known. The operation of the brain, the nervous system, the subtle changes that take place within the body, contain a story whose details are still to be unfolded.

(2) We do know something about the history of the body. Biologist have long since developed and increasingly confirmed a theory of organic evolution which traces the development of animal forms from lowly unicellular beginnings to the higher and more complex structures.

II. Man is a being of spirit.

The human spirit cannot be analysed as the body can, and we have no means of defending its essential nature. It is manifested only in action.
Observation upon the action of man reveals three modes of activity which cannot merely be explained in terms of zoology.

A. Intellect.—
(1) In man self-consciousness has a strength, a definiteness, and an intelligence that it does not possess elsewhere.
(2) In man the power of abstract thought not only exist, but is capable of vast extension.

B. Sensibility.—
(1) Man feels.—
(a) He experiences mental pain or pleasure
(b) He lives an affectional life.
(c) He loves and hates.

C. The Will.—
(1) Man has within himself the power of choosing his supreme end. Animals follow their nature; man has the power of acting upon his own nature almost as if from without, of guiding it within cer- limits, of modifying it by the choice and pros- ecution of ends in life.
(2) Man entertains ideals, and ideals become his inspiration. Man can be true or false to his nature. He can be a hero or a fool. Both possibilities, the noble and the base alike, indicate man's greatness.

"Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?"

I. Jesus was a Jew.
It is impossible to understand Jesus outside of the race in which he was born. The Christian Church has tended to overlook its Judaic origins, but the fact is that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew of Palestine. He shared the experiences of his fellow-countryman. So as we study Jesus we are wholly in a Jewish atmosphere.

A. His attitude toward the Jewish religion—There is no justification of the view that Jesus was attempting to find a church distinct from the Synagogue. The gospels themselves bear little trace of such a view. Throughout the gospels we find Jesus accepting both the Temple and the Synagogue. He was brought up in the Synagogue and he participated in it during the height of his earthly mission. Though he condemned some of those who took part, speaking scathingly of elders and rabbis when they deserved it, he referred to the institution itself with complete respect.

B. His attitude toward the Jewish law.—It is quite evident that Jesus had profound respect for the law as did every true Jew. He never opposed it or hinted that it would ever pass away. But it is significant to note that he always sought to get at the spirit of the law. He sought to get back to the ultimate purpose of the law rather than the exact latter. For an instance, when dealing with the sabbath, a common sense interpretation of the purpose of the law lead him to a lenient position.
II. Jesus was a popular teacher of religion.
It is quite evident that Jesus was a religious teacher in the hills of Galilee. Because of the freshness and force to his teaching and above all his practical common sense and unflinching bravery, he was able to get a hearing. He was a representative of the popular religious movement that emphasized liberalism in religion. He was a modernist of his day.

A. His method of teaching.—
   (1) His method of teaching was that of a layman. His teaching was given when the occasion and situation arose. We find no exhaustive treatment of any topic.
   (2) His teaching was concrete, personal, illustrative, and direct. This means that our approach to the teaching of Jesus must be an informal and common sense approach. Any attempt to classify or analyze his teaching in accordance with a rationalized system or principle is quite misleading. The unifying force in his teaching was his religious experience. His experience determined what topics he discussed.

B. Guiding principles in a modern approach to Jesus teaching.—
   (1) The spirit of Jesus teaching is more significant than its detailed form or content. Someone will probably say, "we only know its spirit by its content." This is quite true. However, the spirit of Jesus teaching has not the limitations of its mere content.
   (2) Any approach to Jesus teaching should be from the whole to the parts. Its parts must not be detached for independent consideration without reference to the whole.

III Jesus was a momentously influential character—
Jesus remains the most persistent, inescapable, and influential figure that ever entered history. It was such a personality that split history into A.D. and B.C. It was this personality, born under the humblest of conditions in a conquered province of the Roman Empire, that was able in some thirty years only, of which only a few month were spent in public ministry, to change for many the whole complexion of the world. Here we find a man who, through the process of struggle, so submitted his will to God's will that God used him to reveal his divine plan to man.

A. The personality of Jesus.—The chief and abiding significance of Jesus lay in his personality. Many of his sayings faded out of the memory of the disciples, but him they remembered. "Words effect nothing" says Harnack, "it is the power of the personality that stands behind them." (What is Christianity, p. 48)²

B. Jesus' influence in personal experience—It is not abstractions but persons who most deeply influence us, e.g., William James was

once asked to give his definition of spirituality. After a moment's hesitation he answered that he was not sure he could give the meaning in words, but he could point to a person who was it—Phillips Brooks. Likewise when asked to give a definition of Christianity we may not know an abstract theological definition, but we can point to a personal spirit—Jesus Christ.

“What Did Jesus Achieve Through His Life and Death”

I. Through his life, Jesus achieved unity with God and with the human race.

The appearance of such a person, more divine and more human, than any other, and standing in closest unity at once with God and man, is the most significant and hopeful event in human history. This divine character or this unity with God was nothing thrust upon Jesus from above, but it was a definite achievement. (Contrary to Clark's view)

A. Revelation of God—In the very quality of his life, Christ gave expression to the character of God. In particular, Christ showed men what attitude of mind and heart God held toward them, and consequently, how they should feel toward him. Jesus reveals to us a God who works in the world to bring goodness to pass, and who through human beings is striving to achieve a social order that is moral in its nature and capable of expressing love. So to the early Christians Jesus was more than Jesus. He was the Logos, they said, the Word of God, God's expression, the forthgiving of the Eternal, revealing himself in one life.

B. Revelation of man—As a typical human being, Christ illustrated what man was intended to become. By knowing him man may learn their ideal and their proper destiny. At the same time he revealed the actual moral state of men. This he did by contrast. He saw that the best way to throw light upon sin is not by living a life of sinfullness, but by living a sinless life among the sinful. At one and the same time, Christ shows us what we are and what we ought to be. Here is a life that revealed both God and man.

II. Christ brought about the reconciliation between God and man.

Here we approach that special work for the good of a sinful world which the Scriptures attribute to Christ.

A. The condition of the reconciliation—Because of the sinfulness of human beings they need to be brought to God in penitence, to be forgiven by him, and to receive new disposition and power to live in goodness. This is the only way of exchanging the life of sin for the life which man was made. In the experience of such reconciliation there will be three elements:

(1) On the part of man, penitent turning from sin to God. (illus. The prodigal son in the parable)

(2) On the part of God, pardon and fatherly acceptance of man. (illus. the father in the parable of the prodigal son)
(3) In the mutual relation that follows, the imparting by God and
the receiving by man of the spiritual quality and power by
which they can live in fellowship with him.

B. The Work of Christ in effecting this reconciliation.—
(1) The action of God in the work of Christ was self expression
with reference to sin, as hating sin, as Savior, and as sin-
bearer. In the attitude of Christ with reference to sin, in these
two respects, God was expressing his own:
(a) God’s attitude toward sin is that of one who hates it and
condemns it: and this truth he expressed in Christ.
(b) God’s attitude toward sinners is that of one who desires to
save them: and this truth he expressed in Christ.
(2) The twofold object in making this self expression of God in
Christ was to win men, and to satisfy God.
(a) The work of God in Christ was intended to win men out
of sin to God.
(b) The work of self-expression in Christ was further in-
tended to satisfy God.

III. Conclusion.
The outcome of Christ’s mission and achievement may be made plain
by the Christian answer to three questions: how God thinks of the
world, how God thinks of men, and how men think of God. In all these
relations Christ stands as the point of reconciliation and of unity.

“How God Works Today
Through His Spirit”

I. How God works through his spirit in the world. It is a common ten-
dency today to be sceptical concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit
in the world. Even Christians have fallen victim to this notion. Many
suppose it irreverent to believe that the Holy Spirit is as great in the
world now as it was in the days of the apostles. But by such thoughts
we do injustice to God and render our faith ineffective. We must be-
lieve that the living Spirit—that is, the present living God—is working
through history.
A. Man’s growing understanding of the world.—More and more man
is coming to understand the complexities of nature both physical
and human. Through increased scientific learning he has been able
to free himself from the bondage of drudgery and has
stamped out many dreaded plagues and diseases, alleviated his
pain, prolonged his life and given greater security and physical
well-being. All of these advances have come about because of the
constant work of God’s spirit in the life of man and in the world.
Even the scientists who do not recognize God are guided by his
spirit. (Illustration: quotation from a verse of Isaiah where the
prophet pictures God saying to Cyrus the Persian, “I girded thee,
though thou hast not known me.” How familiar an experience it
is to be ministered to by forces we do not recognize.)
B. His work in bringing about moral progress in the race.—Not only is the spirit of God working that we might differentiate between right and wrong, but he is also working that we will chose the right. He is forever seeking us only hoping that we will seek him. The search is a double one, and the good life is the work of both the spirit of God and the effort of man. All good that appears in men grows up under the fostering care of the Holy Spirit.

II. How God works through his spirit in the church.
In speaking of “the Church” as it has historically appeared, we shall define it in a very catholic and comprehensive manner, as including the sum of those organizations which have been formed to serve as organs of Christ, for the expression and promotion of his religion.
A. His work in bringing about a more Catholic Church.—
B. His work through the Church in revealing eternal truths.—
   (1) In all ages the spirit brings the words of Christ to remembrance, by reviving forgotten or neglected Christian truths in forms suited to the new times, thus never suffering what he taught to pass out of life.
   (2) The Church is not assured of unfailing correctness in thinking neither is it assured of absolute truth. The Church, just as individuals, is in history, therefore it must deal with the relative. However, toward the perfect truth in this highest and most practical realm, the Holy Spirit is steadily leading his people.

III. How God works through his spirit in the individual.—
As the circle is narrowed from the world to the Church and from the Church to the individual, the work of the Holy Spirit becomes more specific and intense. In the individual human beings is done the fundamental work.
A. A brief discussion of individuals who greatly reveal the working of the Spirit of God.—
   (1) David Livingstone.—
   (2) Mahatma Gandhi.—
   (3) Albert Schweitzer.—
   (4) Jesus of Nazareth.—
B. The working of the spirit of God in bringing about moral transformation within the individual.—
   (1) God, the conductor of this moral transformation, is pledged in truth and love to complete it.
   (2) This moral transformation cannot take place, except by the co-operation of man with God in promoting it.

“What Christians Believe
About History and the Future”

I. What Christians believe about History.
Most Christians have been very firm on the view that God is working in the historical process, where he has willed that men should learn to be efficient instruments of the divine energy.
A. The direction of history.—Christians over the years have seen the
direction of history in the hands of God. God is the ultimate
ground of the historical process. A clearer understanding of this
view may come from an illustration contrasting the Greek and the
Christian conceptions of history.
(1) Greek—Here the movement of history is cyclical. It has no
ultimate goal. Like an ever moving merry-go-round, history
is continually moving never getting anywhere.
(2) Christian view—Here we find history (moving) toward a
meaningful goal. It has an ultimate purpose.

B. The Kingdom of God.—It is a common Christian view that history
is moving toward the kingdom of God. This Christian Ideal has
often been interpreted in many ways.
(1) The view that Christ will come again and established the
kingdom.
(2) The view that the kingdom will come to realization by means
of the increasing influence of the Church which is destined to
dominate the world.
(3) However varied the interpretations are, it is probably com-
monly agreed by all Christians that God’s final purpose is the
building of a regenerated human society which will include
all mankind in a common fellowship of well-ordered living.

II. What Christian believe about the future.
A. Death, and the continuance of the spirit.—
(1) Death—death is the cessation of the physical life,—the stop-
ping of the unexplained vital process by which the physical
organism is maintained in action. It closes life in earthly
environment.
(2) Continuance of the Spirit.—The spirit leaves the material
body, but lives on, and enters new scenes of action. In this
statement it is assumed that all men continue to exist after
death. It is true that there is no demonstrative proof of uni-
versal immorality, for the region of the unseen life is one con-
cerning which strict demonstration is impossible. But because
it is unseen doesn’t mean that it has no reality. (Illustration:
Our bodies can be seen but not our personalities. But who
can argue that the personality does not exist. No one ever saw
an idea or an ideal, or a love or a truth. But who can deny
that these are not the deepest forces in our lives). This is the
Christian faith of immortality.

B. Judgment.—Most Christians have believed that there will be a
judgment of God concerning the life that a man has lived.
(1) Popular view.—It is commonly held by many Christians that
there will be a judgment at the end of this earthly career; that
all who have ever lived will there be assembled, and that each
will then receive the final sentence.
(2) Personal view.—The highest court of justice is in the heart of
man when he has been inspired by the teaching of Chirs
Christ. Rather than being the Judge, Christ is the light in which we pass judgment on ourselves. The truth is that everyday our deeds and words, our silence and speech, are building character. Any day that reveals this fact is a day of judgment.

"How to Use the Bible in Modern Theological Construction"

[13 September—23 November 1949]  
[Chester, Pa.]

In this paper written for Christian Theology for Today, King directly confronts a question many of his earlier papers had skirted: how does one reconcile the Bible with science? King finds a solution by following the example of biblical critics such as Millar Burrows and Harry Emerson Fosdick. He defines their approach: "It sees the Bible not as a textbook written with divine hands, but as a portrayal of the experiences of men written in particular historical situations," so "that God reveals himself progressively through human history, and that the final significance of the Scripture lies in the outcome of the process." Davis gave the paper an A— and wrote: "I think you could be more pointed in just how you apply progressive revelation to theological construction. Nonetheless, you do a good piece of work and show that you have grasped the theological significance of biblical criticism."

The question as to the use of the Bible in modern culture stands as a perplexing enigma troubling multitudes of minds. As modern man walks through the pages of this sacred book he is constantly hindered by numerous obstacles standing in his path. He comes to see that the science of the Bible is quite contrary to the science that he has learned in school. He is unable to find the sun standing still in his modern astronomy. His knowledge of biology will not permit him to conceive of saints long deceased arising from their graves. His knowledge of modern medicine causes him to look with disdain on the belief that epilepsy, deafness, blindness and insanity result from the visi-