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FERRE'S CHRISTOLOGY:

"Christ in You the Hope of Glory"

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On January 13, 1957 Dr. Nels F. S. Ferre addressed the Chicago Sunday Evening Club on the subject: "The True Christ." The chairman of the meeting introduced the speaker as one of the contemporary creative theologians who communicates his ideas intelligibly to ordinary people. While we may grant the first characterization we may hesitate to assent to the second. The average man may find it difficult to appreciate the distinction between God as substance (Self-sufficient Being) and God as person, (or Self-sufficient Love); let alone to understand the Christological implications of either. Nevertheless, we appreciate any scholar's courage to share his creative work with the masses in the full awareness of the dangers of misunderstanding. It is, in fact, one of Dr. Ferre's specific aims to make Christian truth intelligible for Main Street believers.

Dr. Ferre is presently at work on a systematic Christology. He graciously sent the writer of this paper a bibliography of specific chapters and articles in which he has dealt with various aspects of Christology to date. These writings cover a space of about fifteen years, from 1940 to 1955. Perhaps the most significant among these is a paper on "The Humanity of Jesus" prepared for the American Section of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church, meeting in August, 1955, under the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. While this last mentioned paper presents a fuller and more detailed spelling out of suggested solutions to Christological problems, we feel that all of the writings of the fifteen year span carry a consistent emphasis. A summary statement of this emphasis appears to be, to this writer at least: "Christ in you the hope of glory:"

This central theme provides a functional and an ethical urgency as well as an evangel. Christology so presented intends to become a witness to Christ for the salvation of men. Ferre writes existentially as a committed believer in the Incarnation and God's redemptive agape. While this theologian frequently discounts the witness to Jesus on the part of the Gospel writers because of the latter's piety, one cannot help but be impressed by the warm and obvious piety of the scholar under discussion.

Before proceeding to a bill of particulars in Christological thought as offered by Ferre, it seems proper to indicate some other presuppositions that he openly confesses to be inherent in his theological approach.

"Christian theology," says Ferre, "must precede Christian philosophy."¹ In Christian theology we see Jesus Christ as holy, unchangeable, eternal love. Herein rests "our central principle of interpretation."²

¹The Christian Faith, p. 90.

²Ibid.

There are absolutes for Christian theology. "The full Christian truth is . . . that in Jesus the absolute truth has been seen. God is seen in a historical revelation."³

Neither religious fanaticism (American fundamentalism), nor liberalism provides an adequate answer to Christological problems. The first depends on an adequate supernaturalism and literalistic biblicism,⁴ while the latter on the one hand fails to provide an "absolute Gospel" in the Social Gospel,⁵ and on the other hand has put its trust in "education" rather than in "redemption."⁶ Barthianism, too, must be rejected since it fails to be Christian in the highest sense, although it may be prophetic. In the determinism of Barthianism the love of God fails to match the best love we know in our human relations.⁷

"Christianity," according to Ferre, "is threatened both by those who stress what God is at the expense of that He is, and by those who insist that He is and yet refuse to define what He is."⁸ In Christianity we possess a historic revelation", "not a negative mysticism."⁹

Obviously the twentieth century theologians cannot accept as final the creedal foundations of the Early Church and its various ecumenical councils. Our problem is to differentiate between the precious gift and the wrapping, "the form and the content, the letter and the spirit." To make the wrapping more valuable than the gift is as inappropriate as to despise the gift because of the relatively worthless wrapping. The same principle and problem concerns our use of the Bible. Ferre suggests that if the issue were forced, "we should rather keep the wrapping with the gift than to lose the gift entirely;" and that "there is more danger to Christianity from a superficial liberalism than from an indiscriminating fundamentalism."¹⁰

With the weapons of history and reason we are enabled to dispose of biblical literalism and inadequate supernaturalism.¹¹ We are confronted by the problem how to be evangelical and yet liberal. In combining liberalism and evangelicalism "we must combine theologically the absolutes of Christian faith with the relativities of the human reason . . . We must be both religiously evangelical and intellectually liberal."¹² The objective, then, is a "liberal evangelicalism."¹³ In "Ferre on Ferre's Theology: A Letter To The Christian Century," this theologian states: "I believe in an evangelical supernaturalism of intellectual integrity and social concern."¹⁴

Such are some of the presuppositions that Ferre carries into his Christological quest. The dynamic for the task comes from the keen awareness that Christian truth must be set free from any and all admixtures of human tradition no matter how pious. The following quotations from The Sun and the Umbrella voices this concern:

³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴The Christian Fellowship, p. 122.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 117f.

⁷Ibid., p. 123f.

⁸The Christian Faith, p. 83.

⁹Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 95.

¹¹The Christian Fellowship, p. 115.

¹²Ibid., p. 125.

¹³Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴September 28, 1955.

Unfortunately, the face of God has been hid under Christian Umbrellas. The power of the Sun seldom falls directly on the worshippers. The healing rays of the Sun are deflected, thrown back and absorbed by the Umbrellas under which the Gospel of God as Love is proclaimed. Even Christian theology can be an effective Umbrella against the full light of the Sun. Much of the formulation of the Christian faith is made out of a closely woven fabric under which alone the early disciples dared to leave the House of Legality. Can we now sift, in some way, what is Light from what is Umbrella? The task has to be done.¹⁵

What, then, does Ferre present as Christological Light? Let us consider first the Pre-existence of Christ, and secondly the Incarnation.

I. The Pre-existence of Christ

It is futile to speak of Incarnation without accepting the burden of spelling out Who or What enters humanity. If it is asserted that God the Father as personality has become incarnate in the Son then we must forego our insistence on monotheism.

The early creeds did not come to grips with this problem because God was defined as substance. All that was claimed or disputed in these creeds was the question of identity or likeness of substance (homooisia) or (homoiousia). Even the use of the term "Person" did not alter this situation since "person" too, was defined in terms of substance.

We have abandoned the substance category of God and of personality. Now we must assert that personality, even as understood in our contemporary concepts of selfhood, cannot be regarded as the ultimate category of Being. The ultimate reality is Spirit.¹⁶

In view of this how can we answer the question: "Was Jesus a pre-existent personality or a pre-existent aspect of God? If the ultimate category of being is personality, and if Jesus was a personality other than God the Father, however much unity of will there may have been, we do not have a Christian monotheism."¹⁷

Ferre suggests that we must proceed on the basis of monotheism and disciplined by that acceptance explain the pre-existence of Christ. The solution, then, lies in not making personality the whole or inclusive category for God. God is personality as form, even as He is agape as content.¹⁸

To point up the difference between form and content Ferre reminds us that while God is love, love is not God. Actually, form and content, personality and agape, cannot be separated in God; but they can be in creation. In creation we are children of God, created in his form (image), and so was Jesus as a part of this creation. To quote Ferre:

In form we all share divinity of nature. But Jesus differs in the content of nature. In Jesus God's agape

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶"The Humanity of Jesus," p. 18 ff.

¹⁷The Christian Faith, p. 97.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 100 f.

which is His very nature visited man in matchless fullness. Jesus is God's first full revelation of what He really is and wills.¹⁹

We establish the pre-existence of Christ, or the Son, in terms of God's agape. In Ferre's words:

It was this agape which pre-existed from all eternity. This was, indeed, "begotten not made," "very God of very God." Now must this agape be thought to have existed in an impersonal form. Love is never impersonal. It was in the beginning with God, and was God, and without Him was not anything made that was made.²⁰

On the basis of the foregoing it follows that in Jesus we do not have "the eternal Personality which is God" walking on earth. "Not God as Father, but God as Son was in Jesus. Not all of God, when this refers to the totality of God's being, but the very substance of God, when this refers to the quality of God's nature. What God innermost is we see truly in Jesus."²¹

II. The Incarnation

Under this heading we shall consider Ferre's views on the Virgin Birth, the Deity and the Humanity of Jesus, the Relation of the Two Natures, and Jesus' relation to sin.

1. The Virgin Birth. The claims of the Virgin Birth as the vehicle for the Incarnation confront every theologian: to be denied; to be spiritualized; or to be "biologized." Ferre accuses Modernism to have been too quick and even "supercilious" in taking the first option. Fundamentalists are taken to task for choosing the last option and making the literal acceptance of it "a shibboleth of Christian orthodoxy."²² Ferre observes that:

As a matter of clear fact, there can be no progress in the fuller understanding of the Gospel before an actual issue like this is settled, not by neglect, by being dismissed into the limbo of the irrelevant or unessential, but by an honest and earnest investigation of its truth.²³

We must transcend the dilemma into which we have come in the discussions of the last one hundred years between "literalistic ineffectiveness and untruth" and "modernistic starvation or privation of ringing Christian doctrines."²⁴ There must be found a way out of either becoming a "literalist" or a "denier." Ferre finds an "out" by way of finding a precious gift within the "wrapping" of the Virgin Birth accounts of the Gospels. The wrapping is not essential, but "the truth which caused the biological doctrine to be created."²⁵

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 101.

²¹Ibid., p. 101 f.

²²Ibid., p. 103.

²³Ibid., p. 103 f.

²⁴Ibid., p. 103 f.

²⁵Ibid., p. 106.

Even so, it behooves us to realize that "we are all human beings with historical and generally literalistic minds."²⁶ Ferre charges liberalism with forgetting this basic fact and permitting truth to become "too intellectualistic." To quote:

Better, far better, humble belief though crude, the *simplicitas fidei*, than modern skepticism and sophistication which is a cover up for the need of a burning faith. It is well to remember that religion is by its nature historical, and to work toward a more adequate understanding of the deeper meaning of the historical doctrine rather than to loose the hounds of atheism and secularism. Christianity must be understood from within its own nature and in terms of its own doctrine to be most highly effective and to be most pearly true. That is the reason that many liberals live on inherited spiritual capital. They live all too often on the spiritual intensity of their conservative background . . . our aim is definitely to do away with what is insufficient in traditional forms only by providing the fuller sufficiency of positive truth.²⁷

Ferre believes that the Bible both asserts and denies the paternity of Joseph, and thus provides a confused account. Nor must we think of belief in the Virgin Birth as necessary or common in Biblical days if we recognize the "argument from silence."

On the other hand we cannot be satisfied with the "myth" approach of neo-orthodoxy, since it suggests too much of the purely "analogical paradoxical, and irrational," although the notion of "myth" may have some relevance.²⁸

Furthermore, the fact that other religions provide similar stories, or our rejection of the supernatural *per se*, gives us no right to reject the Virgin Birth, since to do so would be "uncritical reasoning *a priori*."

Actually, we are in no position to disprove the Virgin Birth as a biological fact. But the Biblical record is not clear, and our primary job is to discover the meaning of the Virgin Birth and to treat it honestly as a historical doctrine.²⁹ Our problem here runs parallel to our problem concerning the Bible. Our job is to distinguish between the spirit and the letter, between the gift and the wrapping, "to recognize the earthen vessels in which God puts His truth and love."³⁰

How, then, may we understand and utilize the historic formulation of the Virgin Birth. Ferre answers as follows:

The Virgin Birth stands for the truth of discontinuity imposed on continuity. The absence of male participation signifies to many believers just this truth. That is the sign, the token, of God's unique giving of Himself. We insist that the historic truth is infinitely larger and more significant than its biological formulation, but we think that the most effective way to point to the truth is through the

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 132 f.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 108 f.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 104 f.

historic formulation. We can best point to the exceptional spiritual fact by interpreting the account of the exceptional physical fact. For there is this basic pedagogical problem involved: to what extent can we forfeit the literal truth and still be spiritually effective with the mass of the people?³¹

Here, as elsewhere, Ferre strives for an evangelical witness that will nurture rather than destroy Christian faith. Since people seem to require the vehicles of "concrete and historical forms" he suggests that "it is folly for the teachers of the Christian faith to ignore psychological and pragmatical considerations," and that we must aim not only to be Christ-centered in content, but pupil-centered in technique.

The meaning of the Virgin Birth rests at the heart of the meaning of the Incarnation. In The Sun and the Umbrella, Ferre asserts that "Jesus' human acceptance of God is far secondary to God's own preparation and initiative in coming into history through him."³²

In the Christian Faith we find the following summary of the importance of the Virgin Birth to Christian belief:

The truth of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth which must be kept if our Christian faith is to be as vital as possible is this: Jesus, the Saviour, the Revealer, and the Redeemer, was truly conceived by the Holy Spirit. Whether God worked without or with a human male is not of critical importance except to those who make the human category of undue significance, or to those who cannot believe a divine doctrine unless it be illustrated by a miracle in human terms, or to those who cannot keep their Christian faith apart from a belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible. Of critical importance, however, is the central fact of Christianity that what was born was primarily of God and not of man. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth can be used to stand watch over the reality of the Incarnation. The Son of God was "begotten not made." Here is no unusual human being and nothing more. Here is no biological sport and nothing more. This very approach is from nature to God, not from God to man. And if God is conceived of as creating some intermediary creature, we have the heresy of Arianism, albeit in new terms, all over again. The Incarnation of the Son means that the content of Jesus' personality which became the foundation of the new fellowship and a new faith, which became God's redemptive revelation to mankind and the very standard of truth, was indeed "very God of very God." That which was most important about Jesus, therefore was not his humanity but his deity. We mean deity in the sense of God's very nature, not divinity in some euphemistic sense. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth thus enforces the truth that we have already found in the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ;³⁴

Unfortunately the doctrine of the Virgin Birth has been employed to bolster the deity of Jesus so as to assert his sinlessness. Dogmas

³¹Ibid., p. 130 f.

³²Ibid., p. 133.

³³Op. cit., p. 25.

³⁴Op. cit., p. 109 f.

concerning the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary arose out of this misconception. The result is a Jesus who can be no more than

a quasi-human being arbitrarily thrust into history, a stranger to our real nature and burdens, who performs an externally miraculous work, instead of one who, fully human like us, so totally and continuously opened himself to God as Love that he was kept victorious by His power through and beyond a cruel death at the hands of those who hated him.³⁵

This brings us to a major topic and emphasis in Ferre's Christology: The Humanity of Jesus.

2. The Humanity of Jesus. In his letter to the Christian Century Ferre states:

Incarnation involves that Jesus was a true human being whose humanity was fulfilled by his deity. The deity of God as Agape entered into and perfected the humanity of Jesus as Eros. Such fulfillment is not arbitrary or artificial but is the learning obedience through suffering. Having been made perfect in his humanity, as the New Testament claims, he could become the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith."³⁶

In articulating the humanity of Jesus we must first assert full deity as well as full humanity. Liberalism's view of the "divine" in all of us destroys the uniqueness of Jesus as seen in his pre-existence, not as a person, but as the content, the agape of God.³⁷ Likewise we must assert the reality of Jesus' humanity and avoid any and all forms of Docetism. "The Word became flesh. God entered humanity in the fullness of His nature. This is the pivotal truth of Christian faith . . . Jesus' body, mind, and soul were human and subject to natural laws."³⁸

The uniqueness of Jesus is seen in "the fact that in him the full nature of God became embodied and essentially understood for the first time in human history. The divine in Jesus existed from all eternity as his true nature . . . Jesus differed from us all in the given content of his personality."³⁹

In his most recent writings Ferre has occupied himself especially with the humanity of Jesus. His paper on "The Humanity of Jesus" and the book The Sun and the Umbrella spell out his thinking on this subject.

We shall limit ourselves to two aspects of this problem: the relationship of the two natures and the question of Jesus' sinlessness.

In considering the Incarnation Ferre asserts: "The personal Word was there, an eternal unity; the human personality of Jesus was there, a historic development; the unity of one personality with two natures, with two sources, so to speak, was also there. There were the eternal Christ, the historic Jesus and the eternal historic Jesus Christ."⁴⁰

³⁵The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 29.

³⁶September 28, 1955.

³⁷The Christian Faith, p. 113.

³⁸Ibid., p. 113.

³⁹Ibid., p. 114 f.

⁴⁰The Christian Understanding of God, p. 212.

The humanity of Jesus concerns itself with "the historic development" of a normal human individual. Jesus was not a freak, but rather the first human who became truly not merely man, but a man.⁴¹ "While Adam symbolizes the first potential human being, the decisive step beyond animal creation, Jesus was the first actual human being, as Irenaeus saw, the first-born of creation in the proper sense, that is, as a new creature while living on earth and as the first-born from the dead."⁴²

Jesus as a man possessed all the drives of ordinary human life: "the drive to self, the desire for others, and the need of God."⁴³ In this humanity were found all the tensions, suppressions and repressions common to man. The subconscious in Jesus carried the complete recapitulation of human evolution from its animal origins. Both conscious and unconscious conflict raged in this human self.⁴⁴ Ferre follows Irenaeus in describing the recapitulation of the history of the human race in Jesus, known as *anakephalaiosis*. While Ferre rejects Irenaeus' view of Adam as an individual, he believes that Adam seen as total man leaves intact the fact that Jesus' humanity means an actual partaking in flesh and blood "of the original making of man."⁴⁶

The relation of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus Christ may be considered in terms of *anhypostasia* (Cyril of Alexandria and Leontius of Byzantium) or *enhypostasia*. The first would insist that the human nature was dependent upon the hypostatic union, while the latter insists that Jesus had a genuine human nature within the hypostatic union.⁴⁷ *Anhypostasia* leads to the sub-Christian idea of an impersonal humanity. When carried to its logical conclusion this view destroys the Incarnation. It also follows from this view that Jesus could not sin, and the Virgin Birth would represent the means of endowing an impersonal human nature with an "ego," a full nature of God, that would insure sinlessness.⁴⁸ Ferre suggests, however, that *anhypostasia* does not need to cause such separation of Jesus from humanity, provided we see the Incarnation not as a descent of God externally upon man, but rather as an organic fruition in the development of the human personality of Jesus. "*Anhypostasia* then signifies the new creature of Christ by means of which we can become new creatures in Christ."⁴⁹ In the latter case the Virgin Birth can stand for effecting "actually and stubbornly a new kind of human nature, a discontinuous dimension imposed on the level of human nature as it was before this new creation in Jesus, a new arriving that fulfills previous continuity. The Virgin Birth then may stand for the miracle of the conception of the Son of God in human history both on the side of God and of man."⁵⁰ Such a view would insist that no human nature ever exists apart from God at any stage "and least of all at its consummation."⁵¹

In *enhypostasia* we have the insistence on the independent reality of the human nature both before and after the hypostatic union. It is here that Ferre places his major emphasis. Citing Gregory of Nazianzus with

⁴¹"The Humanity of Jesus," p. 8.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5 f.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7 ff.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 10 f.

approval he says: "What he was he continued to be; what he was not he took to himself . . . having converse with flesh by means of mind."⁵² The God-man does not represent the self of God the Son, "appropriated, limited and conditioned," becoming "the personal subject of the manhood of Christ" as suggested by Apollinaris and possibly by Brunner.⁵³ Such a view does not do justice to Jesus' humanity. Rather we have the humanity of Jesus "struggling" and "learning obedience," and becoming "willing" in the encounter with the "Agape life of God."⁵⁴ The entire concept of the fullness of time" refers to the fullness of time in the development of Jesus humanity. To quote:

We start not with an unreal but with a genuine human being in whom dwelt the Godhead bodily as the conclusive fulfillment of human nature and history, actually in Jesus and potentially for all men. Jesus is the Godman who is the eternal purpose of God in the fullness of time.⁵⁵

This union of God and man in Jesus Christ must be seen as a process. In discussing this process Ferre distinguishes between substance philosophy, organismic philosophy, and personalistic philosophy. Substance concepts must be rejected as too mechanistic and not implying relations. Organismic concepts make allowance for functional and purposive relations. However, the organismic concepts do not allow for the "intra personal realities and relations." Personalism emphasizes that "personalities do not overlap as personalities." A personalistic Christology, according to Ferre, finds the solution to the problem of the union of the two natures in the concept of "co-inherence," or perichoreses.⁵⁶ To quote Ferre:

The new personality, the Godman is now neither a divine personality besides God, some second God, nor is he any longer a human personality merely enhanced by some spiritual infilling, but a whole new species, a whole new creation, a whole new begetting, where the personality is actually the Godman, the perichoresis of God and man, maintaining distinction on the level of encounter -- so that Jesus could pray to his God and our God -- while also at the same time, effecting a metaphysical union without division or separation of spirits -- so that Jesus could truly say literally in the most important of all categories: "The Father and I are one." Thus Jesus is both God and man, but more properly the Son of God, the Godman, "not a third species" beside God and man, but the new Being of God and man.⁵⁷

Just when the hypostatic union occurred as "a basic fact of Jesus' life," we do not know. But we see Jesus illustrating an Agape life, dying an Agape death, and rising from death as Agape everlastingly victorious.⁵⁸ But this union occurred in and through a struggle from the days of the wilderness temptation, through "Gethsemane and until his

⁵²Ibid., p. 11 (quoted from Theological Orations, IV, 19).

⁵³Ibid., p. 11 (The Mediator).

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁶"The Humanity of Jesus." p. 14 ff.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 13.

dying cry of desertion by God."⁵⁹ Ferre suggests that even the Resurrection may not have brought an end to this struggle, and that though the victory now is assured "with companionship and participation in God beyond our understanding, there may still be "room for further growth in the eternal disciplines and discipleships of God."⁶⁰ Thus Jesus remains the Godman for ever, never shedding his human nature.

Before leaving the discussion of the humanity of Jesus, we must briefly indicate Ferre's thinking on Jesus' sinfulness. To be truly human means to be a sinner. To remove all sin from Jesus means to destroy his true humanity.

In the discussion of this question Ferre distinguishes between Christ and Jesus. This is especially true in The Sun and the Umbrella. To overlook this distinction results in the misinterpretations which have apparently plagued this theologian according to his letter to the Christian Century.⁶¹

"Sinlessness," says Ferre, "is a bloodless category, making an anemic savior. What matters is the reality of his struggles that he was in all things like us, and that victory is possible with God and is indeed a reality in Jesus' life as a 'fragment of the future,' to use Cairn's phrase."⁶²

We cannot accept the sinlessness of Jesus merely on the basis of Bible assertions since these sprang from the adoration and "unreflective piety" of the writers. Only literalists can accept such claims. On the other hand, Jesus' submission to John's baptism, his prayer for forgiveness of debts, and his protestations that none but God is good provide insufficient information regarding his relationship to sin.⁶³

Jesus' experience of sin must be seen in terms of his basic humanity with its drive to self, its anxieties, tensions and fears. To quote Ferre:

Jesus knew sin, in some sense, as a minimum but real experience within his own life; and at a maximum outside himself because of his supreme concern for men Theologically Jesus never saved us from sin unless he assumed it within himself; and sin, not finitude, is precisely our deepest problem. Jesus was "made sin," however, not in the sense that God could ever sin, certainly not even in human form, but that the human nature of Jesus shared our whole history of alienation from God and the anxiety of it which is the root reality of sin. To remove Jesus from our sins categorically is to deny the Incarnation and to destroy its reality and power.⁶⁴

From this point of view, Ferre suggests that it may be proper to speak of Jesus as needing to be born again, that new birth for Jesus was the acceptance of the Incarnation, thus "fulfilling conclusively both the presence and purpose of God and the nature and destiny of man."⁶⁵

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 14.

⁶¹September 28, 1955.

⁶²The Christian Understanding of God, p. 201.

⁶³"The Humanity of Jesus," p. 12.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 13; italics by Ferre.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 13.

The Sun and the Umbrella voices an indictment against theology for hiding the true humanity of Jesus, and thereby distorting the true deity of Christ. To quote:

What, however, has theology done through the centuries with this Gospel and with this figure? How was the life of Jesus mythologized even in the New Testament? First, the writers could not quite deny the tensions, fear and problems in the life of Jesus, but it did present him as sinless, and thereby robbed him of his humanity. All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Our solidarity as men in our present existence is, for one part, based on our community in sin. Our deepest problem as men is not finiteness, but sin; not law, but sin; not death, but sin. The Christian faith believes not that God is too holy to behold sin but that He comes to seek and to save the sinner. The Christian faith knows no absolute, either, which like an inverted rainbow dips from the eternal into finite existence only to return again to perfection; God Himself, in coming to save us, rather, for our sake "becomes sin"; He lives with us, among us, in us, and for us.⁶⁶

Insistence on the true humanity includes insistence on sharing our sinful nature. Without these we have no real Incarnation. In the words of Ferre:

The reason for stressing this fact of Jesus' full humanity is not a desire to attribute sin to the strong Son of God. His life, in all its orises, was wondrously victorious over temptation. We all reverence his life in the power of its inner purity. The reason is rather in principle to assure the reality of the Incarnation; without sinning the sinless Christ became conclusively and organically dominant in the normal human being, Jesus. Jesus was real and fully one of us. He had no artificial childhood and growth. He learned, even to be good, through teachers and experience. In such a man God won history's decisive victory. Through him sin, law and death were lit up and seen for what they were, and conquered both in a particular life and in universal principle.⁶⁷

Ultimately man's hope of redemption rests with the true human nature of Jesus. Because Christ can become victorious in Jesus, Christ can become in us the hope of glory. To quote:

The fact that the love of God could so invade and so pervade an ordinary human being that through him God became conclusively known and effective in human life is history's greatest miracle. . . . His life is the solid hope for every human being, because it showed that we can likewise receive the love of God and can triumph unto death, and beyond, over the power of sin. Theology hid the real power of Incarnation when it raised the Umbrella of idolatry! The heart of the Christian faith, to repeat, assumes and involves the fact that a sinless God "becomes sin" for our sake, not that He sins but that he cohabits a

⁶⁶Op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁷The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 30.

sinful nature, cleansing it, empowering it and making it new. Therefore, Christ in us is the hope of glory and we can all thereby be given the power to become sons of God.⁶⁸

Due to the limitations of this paper we can only make brief reference to the atonement, the resurrection, and the Second Coming.

In the atonement we see God's love and holiness at work. Satisfaction, substitution, and example must all be given their due as inherent in God's redemptive act on Calvary.⁶⁹ Jesus may be regarded as God and Saviour because through His unique manifestation of agape He created a "new order of fellowship."⁷⁰ Our ultimate salvation is in the love of God. All theology that has attempted to fit Jesus into the sacrificial system of Judaism such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, must be rejected since it would make the law of God the foundation of God's relationship to man.⁷¹

In the doctrine of the resurrection we assert that the eternal Christ has by His "historic power" slain history's "basic enemies: sin, law and death."⁷² To assert this is not to assert the bodily resurrection of Jesus since that cannot be proven. On the other hand, although the human Jesus does not save, but only the eternal Christ, Ferre believes that "the historic Jesus very likely encountered the disciples after his own physical death."⁷³ To assert that Jesus could not rise would be to make the order of nature ultimate rather than God, which would be "a full-fledged denial of the Christian faith itself."⁷⁴ To quote Ferre:

God being love, on the other hand, and nature being open, there is no reason at all why Jesus could not and should not rise. The church aborning needed him and after all, all nature exists for the purpose of effecting and perfecting the Church.⁷⁵

Finally, a brief statement of Ferre's view of the Second Coming. The traditional doctrine is called "the darkest of all the Umbrellas," because it allows for hell and torment and thus denies the doctrine of God as agape.⁷⁶

On the other hand, there is a legitimate approach to this doctrine of the Second Coming. In it we see the "closing of the parenthesis of this age . . . Just as creation is a necessary concept of the beginning of our history. In the Second Coming of Christ we see the end of history and God's judgment on it."⁷⁷

⁶⁸Op. cit., p. 30.

⁶⁹The Christian Faith, p. 169 ff.

⁷⁰The Christian Fellowship, p. 127 f.

⁷¹The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 31.

⁷²The Christian Understanding of God., p. 212.

⁷³Ibid., p. 212 f.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁶The Sun and the Umbrella, p. 33.

⁷⁷The Christian Faith, p. 178.

Conclusions:

1. It seems to me that Ferre has not succeeded in establishing some selfhood, or personality, to what he calls the content, or agape of God. He simply asserts that Love is never impersonal. Thus the Incarnation would be a divine ελλεν uniting with a human ελλες, although Ferre denies this.

2. The insistence on and the acceptance of the supernatural as essential to the Christian faith in general, and as seen in the Incarnation in particular, appeals to this writer. But one is at a loss to discover a formula as to when to extract the supernatural from history and historical records, and when to transcend or reject the latter by faith. (Viz. the Virgin Birth; the Epistle to Hebrews, and the Atonement; the resurrection).

3. This writer finds himself less ready to discount the Biblical records and early theological formulations with the charge of "unreflective piety." One doubts whether this charge is any more appropriate to Luke and Paul than to Ferre.

4. Ferre's emphasis on the true humanity of Jesus seems timely and constructive, although he has not made any advance in the problem of Chalcedon: how to avoid dividing the Person and confounding the natures in the Incarnate Word.

5. The serious endeavor to articulate a Christology in other than substance philosophy also is commendable and long over due. Every attempt in this direction is welcome.

6. All in all, this writer must regard Ferre's Christology as constructive in aim. He voices an evangel: to have God's agape possess a man is man's highest destiny, "Christ in us, the hope of glory." The ultimate goal is a fellowship of men who have their fulfillment through fellowship with God as revealed and pioneered by Jesus Christ.