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THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

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WESLEYAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE.

BEING

THE SECOND LECTURE ON THE FOUNDATION OF
JOHN FERNLEY, ESQ.

WITH THE HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S PERSON,
AND NOTES.

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PREFACE.

THE Author's object in these pages has been to concentrate attention on the unity and the indivisibility of the Saviour's Incarnate Person. To this sole purpose he has been rigorously faithful. The reader must also bear it always in mind: otherwise he will mark the absence of many things which so great a title might lead him to expect, but which do not come within the range of the proposed design.

Some apology is due for a certain incongruous combination of the Lecture and the Essay. Occasionally the sentences may seem too free; occasionally they are without doubt too much condensed. This has been to a great extent rendered necessary by the subject, and by the very peculiar circumstances of publication.

One word more of explanation. A considerable number of subsidiary essays were prepared in the form of Notes, accompanied by a few extracts. Gradually and almost insensibly some of these little Essays coalesced into one, forming a sketch of the History of the Doctrine. This left the extracts to comparative isolation. The writer can only hope that the Dissertation which has grown out of the Notes will atone for their meagerness and want of unity.

But these are comparatively unimportant matters. May the One Lord whose Name gives everything its value, condescend to prove by His benediction that He accepts this humble tribute offered in great unworthiness to His glory!

*Didsbury College,
September 16th, 1871.*

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From the Person to the Doctrine.

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THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

THE opening discourse of last year, on the Office of the Holy Ghost, was a fit introduction to every theological doctrine that shall be discussed in this place; but I may refer to it as specifically the prelude of my present theme. While every part of that exposition was complete, none was so luminous and ample as that which was occupied with the Spirit's testimony to Jesus.

Evidently the lecturer's loyalty found it hard to respect the limits of his subject; and to keep his Master in the subordinate place which its treatment required. My duty is to exhibit, in its full supremacy and without restraint, the Christian doctrine of the Person of our Lord. Leaving behind, therefore, though not forgetting, the question which the inaugural lecture left lingering in our ears, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" I have to expound, illustrate, and enforce that earlier and all-essential test of the Gospels, "Whom say ye that I am?"

The central and the chief of the Redeemer's final announcements of the Comforter is, "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit's other offices, of showing the things of Christ to the disciples, bringing His words to their remembrance, guiding them into further truth, all were based upon this—the revelation of

Christ Himself. The Spirit was to be the guardian of the sacred mystery of the Lord's indivisible Person in the union of His two natures; of that mystery which governs all His own utterances, as from the unity of a double consciousness He bears testimony to His one indivisible Self; when He speaks of Himself as departing and yet abiding for ever, humanly remembering His Divine coming forth from the Father and humanly anticipating His going back to the Father, whilst uniting that past and future in one such present as can belong only to God.

In humbly essaying to speak of that one undivided and indivisible Person whose "I" unites two natures, fills heaven and earth, and is the glory of theology, the Holy Ghost will be my sole Teacher, the whole Bible will be my text. All the Bible, I say: for no one passage, no one apostle or prophet, no single book, neither of the Testaments alone, can suffice. Of this the Lord Himself has set the example. When He opened the individual branches of His Messianic commission, He quoted the lawgiver, the prophet, and the psalmist; as in Nazareth, and the temple, and the mountain in Galilee. But when He spoke of His wonderful Self, of that ME which overarches both natures, all offices, and is a manifestation at once temporal and eternal, He appealed to all the Bible that then was. "Search the Scriptures: they are they which testify of Me." "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them" out of "all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." This was the ME which the Spirit should glorify: not the Divine nature, for the restoration of the Divine glory was asked of the Father; not the human nature, for the glorification of that was also the Father's gift in the ascension. But it was what we may term the Divine-human Person of the Christ. The indivisible unity of that Person, to which at the outset I give prominence, will be the governing thought of the present Essay: first, as established in the constitution of the Person of the God-man; and, secondly, as stamping its impress upon the fundamental doctrines of Christian theology.

I.

The constitution of the Redeeming Mediator may be viewed, first, with reference to the eternal ground of His Divine personality; that being determined, we may regard the Person which results from the hypostatic union of two natures. It will then be our task to dilate upon the unity of the Sacred Person as the glory and mystery of the Christian faith: a glory which is beheld and acknowledged only by those who humbly submit to

receive the mystery.

I. The Personality which, as distinct from the Person, of the Christ, constitutes the ground of His eternal unity, is Divine: it is that of the only-begotten Son of the Father, whose conscious personality in the Triune Essence is of necessity unchangeable. Before discussing these two topics, however, a few words must be devoted to the adjustment of our phraseology.

Generally speaking, the vocabulary of Divine mysteries, whether as to the internal relations or the external manifestation of the Godhead, is governed by laws of its own. There is a sense in which, as Luther was never weary of saying, Christian theology speaks with new tongues: it must do so, for it makes familiar to man new and transcendent subjects. The language of the Holy Ghost, who alone searcheth the deep things of God and His Christ, is perfectly simple and unambiguous; and, if we adhered solely to His words, our task would be relieved of much difficulty. But however diligently we attempt this, however fervently we may desire a return in the future to the simplicity of Scripture, it is at present a thing impossible. Theology, as including Christology, is a science, humanly constructed out of Divine elements. It is a science which yields to none in the subtilty of its analysis, the grandeur of its synthesis, and the perfection of its inductive processes. It must speak to the men of this world in their own language. But, while bound by this necessity, it silently stipulates for a reverent construction of its terms, and for a certain tolerance which its high subject-matter demands. Bringing the incomprehensible mysteries of faith down to the region of logical definition, it requires that allowance be made for the essential inadequacy of the most carefully pondered formulas. Its analogies, and illustrations, and suggestions, rising from the earthly to the heavenly things, must receive a liberal and candid interpretation. With those who reject the Scripture, and count theology a vast and bewildering aberration of the human intellect, it of course has no further contention: of them it has no hope. To those who receive the Bible as God's oracle among men, theological science vindicates its terminology by showing that it is as close a reproduction of inspired thought as can be made in uninspired language. Our boldness could indeed scarcely be charged with irreverence were we to say, remembering the Lord's promise, that much of the established and sanctified phraseology of our science is only the penumbra of the sacred orb of Holy Writ, and little less than the words of a secondary inspiration.

This principle may be applied to a wide field of topics in systematic theology. From the Trinity, the most august creation of human speech, with its assemblage of terms defining the hypostatical relations of the Persons of the Triune nature, down through the whole compass of mediatorial theology to the ordinary terms of Christian intercourse, there is an abundant vocabulary which finds no precise representatives in the language of Scripture, although it is perfectly faithful to that language as its developed synonymous expression. But we must limit ourselves to the vocabulary of our present subject. Christology has its own distinct range of theological coinage. Its most glorious achievement here is the term *Θεάνθρωπος*, *Deus-homo*, God-man; and with this it boldly utters the secret of the whole Bible. It long faltered and hesitated in the choice of a word that should express the holy bond between the God and the man: after many experiments it rested on the word Incarnation, which is the faintest possible deviation from the very word of the Holy Ghost through St. John: "He was made flesh." It then defined the two natures in Christ: Scripture still consenting, for it speaks constantly of what the Redeemer is "according to the flesh," and of what He is declared to be as the Son of God, Himself "God blessed for ever." The distinction of natures is only not declared in this very language. So also is it with the one Person. The New Testament represents our Lord as a conscious, intelligent Agent, who preserves from eternity into time and onward to eternity His own unbroken identity. And this we not inaptly or unreasonably term His undivided personality. It is true that there is a wide difference between personality in us, individuals of a species, and personality in Him of whose Person it may be said that "there is none like unto Him." In Christ, for instance, a new nature adds a new consciousness, without impairing the essential unity of the Self: of this we find in our own being scarcely any analogy. In Christ two distinct wills, the human and the Divine, blend in one Divine-human and supreme purpose: here also analogy affords us only a precarious help. In Christ a new becoming, a dawning sense of existence, grows up within an eternal unchangeable being: in this, analogy all but entirely fails us. Difficulties might be multiplied; and it cannot be said that our theological language does more than defend the doctrine from error. When it speaks of one indivisible personality in the Redeemer, it does not profess to use a word that is shielded from censure; it only avows that in Christ all things that are twofold, all the double elements of being, are gathered up into a higher unity, and that He is one Person in the

simple meaning of the term: one in supreme Intelligence, consciousness of identity, and all the operations of an agent who wills and acts. [1.]

1. When it is said that the ground of the Saviour's one personality is Divine, we must be understood to mean specifically that of the eternal Son. This is a point of far-reaching importance to the entire doctrine concerning Christ, and we cannot be led astray in pursuing it, provided our thoughts keep rigidly within the limits of revelation.

In the essence of the Godhead there are Three Persons, consubstantial co-eternal, and co-equal, one of whom is revealed to man as God's "own Son" (Roman~ viii. 3), as the "only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 18, iii.16), and as "the First-begotten" who was brought "into the world " (Hebrews i. 6; Colossians i. 15). These are the only three designations that are certainly given in Scripture to the Person who became incarnate. Theology, led by Origen, introduced the paraphrase of the "Eternal Son;" and with strict propriety, since all the interior relations of the Godhead are of necessity eternal. But these three stand out as the elect terms of Holy Writ: generation is common to all; and the Son is the own and only-begotten as it respects the Father, and the first-begotten as it respects us in His incarnation. Let us briefly consider these in their order; but only so far as concerns our present object, to show that the ground of the personality of the God-man is the eternal Sonship.

(1.) It is in the Person of His Son that God unites again our race to Himself. The Son is the one name that belongs to the Redeemer both in heaven and on earth, in time and in eternity. In the persona] subsistences of the Trinity, that is His personal distinction, to receive eternally His personality from the Father: "as the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John v. 26). Two other names are indeed assigned to the pre-existent Mediator. St. John terms Him "the Word," and St. Paul the "Image" of God; both with the same meaning, and both with express reference to the incarnation. He is the reflection to the universe of the invisible God, in the one, and in the other the Revealer of the silent God. But it must be remembered that these terms are introduced only as sublime figures that illustrate the greater name of "Son." They are never used save in connection with that greater name, which gives them their personal character and, so to speak,

hypostatizes them. "The Word was made flesh," St. John tells us; but the glory which was beheld was that of the "only-begotten of the Father," that of the "only-begotten Son" (John i. 18). His first epistle is not an exception; for the swelling paragraph concerning the "Word of Life" finds no pause till it reaches "His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 1-3). St. Paul to the Colossians also makes the "Image of the invisible God" only a secondary attribution to Him who is "the Son of" the Father's "love" (Colossians I. 13-15); and his language is precisely echoed, whether by himself or not, in the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. i. 1,2). Hence, as it is our Lord's Sonship which constitutes His personality in the Divine essence, so it is His Sonship which continues that personality in the flesh. And, in this sense also, "the Son abideth ever." [2.]

(2.) Viewed more expressly with reference to His incarnation, the subject leads to a profound question which forces itself irresistibly on our minds, and is seconded by our hearts, as to the reason why it was the Son of God who took our nature. Doubtless this question is one of many that the Scripture leaves to the silent pondering of the believer's meditation: yet not altogether to silent pondering; for some hints as to the reason, both in Him and in us, are given, which may be shaped into words.

No other Person in the Godhead was incarnate than the Son. Each of the sacred Persons has His propriety, in eternal truth to which the language of Scripture is unvaryingly faithful, with reference to mediatorial redemption; but this pre-eminence is His, that the assumption of our nature, with all its concomitants of sorrow and of joy, belongs only and for ever to Him. The style of Scripture is not that God became incarnate: rather, with unswerving precision, that "the Word, the only-begotten Son, was made flesh and dwelt among us." That the second Person should or could, apart from the Father and the Holy Ghost, take our nature into union with Himself is an unfathomable mystery. But the very word "Son" points to the direction at least where the solution lies. Co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, the Son is yet "God of God;" and, in His eternal subordination to the Father as the Fountain of the Deity—a subordination without inferiority—lies the possibility of His mission to our race, and of His acceptance of that mission. "Let us make man," and "Lo I come," are fragments of heavenly language which fall upon prepared ears with profound meaning. But between this derived Sonship, which the Scripture avows, and the Arian generation in time and for a

special purpose of the Father's will, which the Scripture denies, there is a literally measureless difference. The Son of God is the eternal Son of an eternal Father; but He is an eternal "Son," and in that truth our redemption has its profound prerequisite. "All Mine are Thine," are words of our Lord Himself, which forbid further speculation; but they do not relinquish His original property in us.

The special relation of the eternal Son to the race of mankind may suggest another reason, or rather another aspect of the same reason. There are not wanting intimations in Holy Writ of an essential affinity between the Son, the express Image of the Person of God, and man created also in the Divine image. "All things," says St. Paul, referring however primarily to man, "were created by Him and for Him" (Colossians i. 16): words upon which meditation may inexhaustibly dwell "For Him" were we created, even as He redeemed us "for Himself: "the image of God in us, all the greatness of our nature, being a reflection, distant yet true, of His eternal mind. He is the "First-born before every creature:" again we must understand that man is pre-eminently meant; and the apostle signifies, not simply that the Son was begotten before the creature—a declaration that is included but does not fully explain this most unusual phrase—but that the intelligent creation, and especially man, the elect creature of God, was made after the image and likeness of the Son, with the elements of a nature capable of being partaker of the Divine, to be afterwards crowned and redeemed by Him, when He should "come to His own." Hence we may dare to believe, magnifying the distinction of our birthright, that we had received His nature before He assumed ours. [3.]

To sum up what has been said, and at the same time to anticipate what follows, the abiding personality of the Son gives unity to the entire manifestation of the Divine-human Person. "The Son" absolutely is His supreme name, assumed by Himself and given to Him by His apostles (John iii. 35, Hebrews i. 1-8). Becoming the "Son of man," the name in which He most delighted, He ceased not to be the "Son of God," the name which He permitted His servants to use (Matthew xvi. 16). As He goes onward from strength to strength in His earthly development, He is declared at every new crisis to be the Son. With most solemn emphasis St. Paul tells us He was finally marked out as such in His resurrection, when His human nature had vanquished death and reached perfection (Romans i. 4). But this was only the last of a series of defining crises, of which we can allude to only

three:—His introduction to the world in His incarnation (Hebrews i. 2-6, Luke i. 35); His baptism, which visibly sealed the secret of His birth (Matthew iii. 17); and His death, when the voice of the poor Centurion was chosen to close the long series of angelic, Divine, and human testimonies—"Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew xxvii. 54). [4.]

2. The ground of our Lord's indivisible personality being His Divine Sonship, it must be steadfastly maintained that it knows no change. In His voluntary manifestation in this world of phenomena, where He underwent vicissitudes that have and can have no parallel, He in His essential Self preserved that Divine immutability which is "without variableness or shadow of turning."

(1.) He did not surrender His personality, or divide it with another, or even add to it a second person. In other words, the Son of God did not join to Himself an individual man, begotten and born after the manner of men" sanctified from his mother's womb, educated and trained to the highest perfection of which our nature is capable. Such a union with a second First-born of humanity, especially when regarded as created anew of the Holy Ghost, is not in itself inconceivable. We can imagine this most highly favoured among men, born of this most highly favoured among women, made by the inhabitation of the Son of God the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely; "with such grace poured upon his lips that he should speak as never man spake;" and so replenished by that Divine fellowship as to leave the memory of a life and death that should eclipse all other recorded excellence. But, fair as this ideal is, it is only a vision. The Scripture knows no such alliance. The First-begotten is brought into the world in quite another way. The Father sends His Son and receives Him again in the flesh,—Him, and not a son of man whom He brings with Him. The Holy Spirit prepares for Him the elements of our nature, "that holy thing," to be His body; and the Son takes the body thus prepared, and becomes partaker of our flesh and blood (Luke i. 35; Hebrews x. 5, ii. 14). In the sacred record there occurs no expression that can be pressed into the service of a double personality in Christ. He never speaks of a second Self, or even of a higher or lower nature. The necessity of doctrine, when He left it to the more systematic teaching of His apostles, required that they should make this latter distinction; but it will be found that they invariably guard, and by a phraseology chosen for the purpose, the unity of His indivisible Person. [5.]

This only pays its tribute to the necessity of our redemption. Our salvation could not come from a brother of our race, however richly endowed with the Spirit, however high in the fellowship of God. Enough that one so greatly beloved should save himself; that indeed must needs follow: but others he could not save. At the utmost, such a union of the Son of God with a man would simply have exhibited a higher degree of what in kind was seen in Adam. That holy man would only have been the vehicle or sphere of a nobler Divine theophany, and more like one of the judges or prophets than we dare to think He could not, in the sense which Scripture always teaches, represent our nature; and the link between that Christ Jesus—supposing him to be then Christ Jesus—and the Son of God, would have been one which, though forged in heaven, might be strained and broken upon earth. Such an alliance, in very deed, Satan suspected between God and the Holy One led up to him in the wilderness. He remembered one great breach, when the Third Person of the Trinity was separated by the Fall from a man in whom God was well pleased. He essayed his craft a second time; but, as the fathers used to say, he was cheated by his own devices; and, this time hopelessly baffled, held his error in reserve for the Nestorian heresy.

(2.) To be more particular, modern theology has expressed the sense of the scriptural statements on this subject by the affirmation that the Redeemer assumed our impersonal nature. I will comment on the expression, and then turn from it with more satisfaction to a summary of those Scriptures which it professes to explain.

No clear idea can be conceived of an impersonal intelligent nature. But the phrase may perform good service if it only guards the truth that when our Lord became incarnate He took our nature, with all its personal capacities and powers, into such a union with Himself as forbade its personality to be for a single instant distinct. Nothing in His entire human development but became part of the Self of the Divine Son. The dawning consciousness of the Infant belonged to the God-man. This Child never had the "knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother" (Isaiah viii. 4), to human parents: His first incarnate word speaks of one Father, common to His Divine and human natures (Luke ii. 49), and from that moment to the end there is but one Divine "I" spoken through human lips. There is no communion indicated between the lower nature and the higher; only between the one Christ and His Father. The perfect human will remained;

yet in such necessary though free harmony with His Divine will that the Scripture never distinguishes between the two. But when the absolute personality, that which gives unity of operation to an agent, is concerned, the simple truth is forced upon us that the Redeemer's human nature is without it. He formed for Himself in the incarnation a new embodiment of our nature; and in such an unspeakable manner that He became man while He continued to be God. To every created eye that beheld Him He was very man; but angels and men learned to acknowledge, when taught of the Spirit, that He was God manifest in the flesh, and that there did not exist, and could not exist, a human person in Christ apart from the Personal Son. Thus understood, His manhood was and is impersonal.

It is a relief to turn to the sayings of the Word. I take three from St. John, he being pre-eminently the evangelist of the incarnation: three which individually and in the union of their mutual lights declare without definition all that man labours to define.

First in order, though last in time—in fact, the last saying of Scripture concerning the incarnation—is the testimony that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh (1 John iv. 2,3). Not now to dwell on other purposes for which this striking expression was adopted, it is obvious that the Lord Jesus is said to have come, not into, but "in," the verity of our flesh: "the flesh" here, paradoxical as it may seem, meaning the matter of our earthly organization, and the whole nature of which it is the visible frame. The second phrase, "The Word was made flesh" (John i. 14)—the most wonderful of all the incarnation-sayings—utters the same truth. It has been exaggerated into a meaning which will hereafter be condemned; but no perversion must blind us to the doctrine here plainly taught, that the Logos, the Son, so came in the flesh as to make that flesh His own, part of Himself, nay, His very Self. He assumed our nature with as much reality of possession as that by which He held His Divine Being of the Father, with such a perfect identification indeed as leaves St. Paul's assumption-terms far behind. The third phrase, He "dwelt among us" (John i. 14), a phrase which represents many other variations of the idea, expands the same truth. "Among us," or in us, or in the essential elements of our nature, He dwelt and still dwells: not sharing our human conditions for a season, as a stranger tarrying but for a night. He appeared in us, in our nature as a temple, to inhabit it with His glory, and pour the light of His grace and truth into the souls of all who enter into

His fellowship as He has entered into theirs. He has made of our nature a new sanctuary, filled with the Spirit of holiness which all who are one with Him receive, and thereby become "partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews xii. 10). But that temple is still Himself.

Uniting the three phrases, it will be found that, while they carry the full meaning of what is understood by an impersonal human nature, they so qualify each other as to rescue that truth from every kind of perversion. The strongest and boldest word, "was made flesh," has on either side its meet corrective: He "came" in the flesh, and still continues therefore to be the Son of God in the flesh which He enters. On the other hand, that flesh is the shrine in which He dwells: He who dwells in the temple is greater than the temple, and the natures are therefore distinct. The central text gives its strength to the other two, while by them it is in some sense softened and explained. The doctrine taught by these three gradational sayings—"He came in flesh," "He became flesh," "He dwelt in flesh,"—is precisely the same which the other apostles declare in other almost equally emphatic terms: that is, by His taking "on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews ii. 16), by His partaking of the children's "flesh and blood" (Hebrews ii. 14), and by His being "made of a woman" (Galatians iv. 4). And all is confirmed by Him who gives these other witnesses their testimony, and who best knows the secrets of His own being. He calls Himself "the Son of man," meaning far more than Ezekiel or than Daniel knew: He is the Son and Representative of the kind or race of man. [6.]

II. We are thus led to consider the Divine-human Person of our Lord, His personality being only Divine. The distinction here established, and the terms employed to establish it, are not found in Scripture; but the tenour of Scripture cannot be understood without bearing it generally in mind. Nor has it been current in systematic theology, which has hovered about some such expedient without venturing to settle upon it as a principle of interpretation. How far it is justified will appear as we proceed to show that the two natures in Christ's Person are distinct and perfect; that neither of them undergoes any change in consequence of the union; and that the One Person may be regarded as God or as man interchangeably.

1. The Person of Christ is the result of the indivisible and abiding union of the Divine and human natures. This is perhaps the most wonderful proposition that theology has to affirm: a

stumbling-block to the unbeliever, it is a sore offence to all philosophy, but the very rejoicing of the heart to Christian faith.

(1.) The term "truly" (the Centurion's ληθ_ς, Mark xv. 39) was employed by the fathers of antiquity to declare their faith in the supreme Divinity of the Son. The specific protest of this word was not needed in apostolic times. But the apostles predicted the coming of those who should deny "the only Lord God" (2 Peter ii. 1, Jude 4); and the second century witnessed the beginning of heresies which assailed, not so much the Divinity of our Lord, as, so to speak, the integrity of His Divine nature. The Gnostic sects united in asserting that the better part of the Christ was an emanation from God which descended upon the man Jesus, or rather, as will be seen, upon what seemed to be such,—thus an imaginary God upon an imaginary man. Sabellius did not indeed impair His Godhead, but, if the paradox be allowed, abolished it nevertheless by denying the Son's distinct subsistence. Arius at a later time gathered up the scattered hints of many heresies into the fatal affirmation that the Son of God was Divine, but not of the Divine essence, not co-eternal, and not strictly consubstantial, with the Father; begotten before the world, but yet in time; and being, before all human computation begins, among the things that were not. This ancient error, after which for one melancholy age the whole world went out, was rebuked by the Nicene Creed, in a formula that precisely reflects the spirit of Scripture without using its language. The Arian delusion has never since overspread the earth, or taken a formal place among the heresies. It has indeed continued to fascinate individual thinkers, has entangled many honest speculatists, and coloured too much of the poetry of our own and other Christian nations. But the Nicene theology, especially as represented by the somewhat chastised Confession used in our services, has on the whole ruled the church of Christ. "Very God of very God" has been the avowal of a faith that there is nothing essential to the nature Divine that is not in the Person of our Lord. When the Father sent His Son He gave His other, equal Self: nothing Divine that did not with Him leave, so far as He left, the bosom of the Father: ascending once more from the streams of human theology to the absolutely undefiled fountain, "God was manifest in the flesh." The Old Testament, paying its first tribute to the human nature, announces that the Seed of the woman should save the world; and the New Testament opens with the revelation that that Seed of the woman is Immanuel, God with us.

(2.) So also the term "perfectly" was anciently used to express the church's faith in the veritable manhood of the Christ. He is man without defect, without superfluity, in the perfect integrity of human nature.

To the theory that Jesus of Nazareth is only man, it hardly enters into our design to make more than passing reference. It denies the very first postulate of that doctrine of the Person of Christ which is the object of our exposition. With the other heresies to which allusion has been or will be made, we may hold controversy: they have their several more or less consistent hypotheses concerning both the Person and the work of Christ. The Humanitarians, as they may be called, teach indeed something of His work; but His Person, in the sense we assign, is to them an idle term. The Ebionites of antiquity, and their modern descendants the Socinians,—descendants, but with few links of any intermediate lineage,—simply oppose the full living current of Scripture, the plainest sayings of which they either torture or trifle with or suppress. By making the Author of the Christian faith a man of like passions with ourselves, they destroy the very foundations of the truth. Redemption has no meaning; the Bible has lost its living soul; and the gulf between God and man remains impassable. Upon this in every sense *human* theory—it deserves no better name—we can now only look down with silent pity.

The manhood of Christ is without defect. The first assault of heresy on our Lord's Person was aimed at His human nature. The oriental heretics who troubled the old age of St. John, whom St. Paul also had more casually encountered, denied that the man in Christ was more than a mere semblance. In their horror of matter as the seat of all evil, from which therefore the spiritual Christ came to deliver us, they invented a thousand expedients to make the redeeming work effectual through a merely phantastic or delusive union of God's Messenger with our flesh. The Church condemned them as Docetics. The last writer of the Bible, in its final document, was not so tolerant. He called the holder of this error, which robbed the Redeemer of His veritable manhood, "Antichrist;" and language has, to the true discernment of the Christian ear, no more terrible anathema than that. But it was not St. John alone who spoke: it was Christ Himself who thus declared to the race of His adoption, that He "counts that man *His enemy*" who violates the reality of His human flesh and blood.

In the course of ages another error arose, not anticipated in Scripture; an error which, held loosely by Arius, was shaped into consistency by Apollinaris, and impaired the integrity of our Lord's manhood by taking from Him His intellectual nature, His rational soul. On this theory the Divine Logos literally took flesh and blood, informing the sensitive nature of Christ with the Divinity instead of a thinking mind. This monstrous perversion of St. John's words, "Jesus Christ came in flesh," was rebuked in the second Œcumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381; but the formula of condemnation appears only in the Athanasian Creed: "Perfect God, perfect man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh." Thus, we may believe, did the Holy Ghost, who prepared for the Lord His human nature, vindicate the integrity of that nature, and defend the holy vesture from those who would rend it. And we may be sure that the condemnation was just. If the resolution of Christ's flesh and blood into mere semblance was Antichrist, much more was the annihilation of the nobler part, the essential part, of the nature which Christ came to redeem. The Lord rebuked Simon Peter for standing between Himself and His human passion. And in that rebuke Apollinaris was condemned: "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" For it was through His human spirit, in which He sometimes is heard "rejoicing," through His human soul, which "was exceeding sorrowful even unto death," through His human mind, on which was imprinted anew the violated law, and the verity of which is proved by innumerable tokens of positive exercise and negative limitation, that He redeemed the spirit, soul, and body of mankind.

Our Lord's manhood is also without superfluity. The error of Apollinaris was one of excess as well as of defect. It not only robbed the Christ of the human mind in which to think, and learn, and teach, and suffer; it also gave Him the Divine Logos as an excessive and exaggerated intellect. There is a certain grotesque grandeur in the conception of this heresy, the most imposing, and perhaps the most enduring, the traces of which are found in Christological history. Modified in Eutychianism and its Monothelite sequel, it has recently appeared in the Exinanition-theories of Germany and France as well as in some well-known American speculations; and has infected the popular thought and speech where the doctrine has not been dreamt of. Its influence may be detected wherever the Lord Jesus is regarded as thinking, feeling, and acting, directly as God without the intermediation of a finite rational soul. It is an error which does not generally reveal its evil effect; but it commits an

irreparable breach in theology. The splendid gift it seems to bestow in return for what it takes from Christ is a pure unreality. And its practical influence removes from Christian life the human example of the Lord. [7.]

Hence the manhood of our Lord was simply and only perfect in its integrity: not more, not less, than the realized ideal of human nature as in the mind of God, in the mind of the Son, it existed at the creation. But it must be remembered that its very perfection made this manhood a new thing; a new thing, and yet only the restoration of the old which we had from the beginning.

The second Head of the human race was in mind, soul, flesh, perfect; the goodness of man's beautiful form as unmarred by man's sin. In Him was no germ of evil that might by any possibility find development: with the grief that may be felt for sin, as also with the grief that sin entails, He became vicariously acquainted, beyond all experience of the most wretched of its victims. But in Him was no sin, or the possibility of sin. In all that belongs of right to man He is perfect: nothing is in Him that man had not at the first. Apart from its union with the Son, our human nature had no new element of strength or capacity added: the very utmost that human mind in human flesh can do or endure was in its resources: no less, no more. St. John's word may be borrowed to sum up all: "Which thing is true in Him and in us,"—that "Holy Thing" (Luke i. 35).

2. It must now be shown that the two natures of our Lord undergo no change in consequence of the Incarnation. Any such imaginable change may be assumed to refer to the Divinity, or to the manhood, or to both, through some undefinable result of the union.

(1.) There could be no change in the Divine nature, by the very terms of the statement; though an opposite theory has been very popular, both in ancient and in modern times, especially on the continent during the present century. Speculative theology has made St. John's sentence, "the Word was made flesh," its starting-point; and has found the basis of its exposition in St. Paul's words to the Philippians (chap. ii. 8), "but made Himself of no reputation," or, literally, "emptied Himself." These words are capable of two connections with the context: one of these being chosen, they mean that He who existed in the form of God thought not, when human redemption demanded, His manifest equality with God a thing to be eagerly retained—had He so thought, a descent to the sphere of our salvation would have been

impossible—but emptied Himself, assuming and being found in the form of a servant. This undoubtedly signifies that the Eternal Son voluntarily divested Himself of something when He became man. A great prize He seized, (adhering to the phraseology,) but much He gave up. What He surrendered He Himself has told us (John xvii. 5): it was "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." Hence He consented "for a season, if need be"—and there was infinite need—to take the fashion of man upon Him, to make that lower nature the main vehicle of His self-manifestation, and thus to become the minister of human redemption. He emptied Himself, or voluntarily gave up His repute, and kept Himself down in this lower sphere: otherwise He must have ascended "where He was before" too soon. He underwent the whole process of human development: including the assault of Satanic temptation, both as *common to man* and as *proper to Christ*. Making His Divinity for a season (*λίγον ῥτι*) secondary and not supreme, He surrendered Himself to the disposal of the Holy Spirit,—the Spirit both of His Divine and of His human nature. In nothing that concerned redemption did He as yet act as "Master and Lord," but as "he that serveth." He received His knowledge through human faculties. During the course of His humbled estate, He spake as a man, He understood as a man, He thought as a man,—He, that is, the Divine-human Son; and, save at occasional periods when the irrepressible community with the Father burst through every restraint, and beholders "were greatly amazed" (Mark ix. 15), He made His human life of submission the law of His manifestation, limiting Himself as none but Himself could limit Him. [8.]

But this self-humiliation or self-sacrifice is very different from that of the modern theories of the exinanition of Christ. These theories—they are many—unite in one common principle, that the Eternal Son, as an energy or potency of the Divine nature, contracted Himself voluntarily within finite conditions of existence; sank, if such language without meaning may be tolerated for a moment, from the Absolute into the Relative; and passed through a mysterious zero as touching the Divine into the beginning of a human consciousness in which the Divine would again gradually resume its glory. This would appear to many advocates of the doctrine an exaggeration; but it is honest as an exposition of what their sentiments appear to all but themselves. This is the legitimate account"of the common element in their various interpretations of "the Word was made flesh." It may be enough, in addition, to state without any argument the consequences of this hypothesis. It tends to

confound variations in the Divine glory or manifestation with variations in His essential existence. It robs God of His power as well as of the display of His power; and puts no difference between His arm and the stretching out of His arm. It makes the human nature unduly "capable of God," and abolishes, which is a thing inconceivable, the distinction between the finite and the Infinite. It not only takes His "reputation" from the Son of God, but for a season His very existence as Divine. It disturbs the Holy Trinity by removing the Second Person, perhaps for ever, from His place and throne; and, by a miracle before which Joshua's pales, withdraws the Son from the heavens that He may reappear in man's sphere with healing in His beams. Instead of a Son of God in the flesh who is still in the bosom of the Father, it gives us a new Being whose development on earth is a kind of platonic reminiscence of a glorious estate in the past eternity. It takes no account of the many passages in which the Redeemer reveals the secret of a Divine consciousness: soliloquising as it were as God, while His ministerial language is that of man; declaring Himself to be in heaven, while, speaking upon earth; assuming the incommunicable "I AM " as His own; and making known some at least of the mysteries of the universe as Himself the "Door opened in heaven." This theory, like many other false theories concerning Christ, is full of a strange and imposing grandeur, and has thrown its spell over some of the profoundest theologians of the day. But it is essentially misleading: it sins against the first rudiments of our notion of the Divine nature; and does not by its fatal travesty of the incarnation solve the difficulties which it promises to solve. The God who sinks so low is God no longer. It is needless to speak with asperity of an error that sprang from the purest desire to save the consistency of truth. But there are not wanting signs that English theology needs to be warned against a speculation which perhaps will bear more noxious fruit in a foreign soil than in that which gave it birth. [9.]

(2.) There was no change through the incarnation in our Lord's human nature. Here indeed it might well be supposed to have been otherwise. A lower nature like ours, thus embraced and upheld and sublimed, might well be expected to rise at the touch of God. But the Scripture assures us that it was not so, and confirms our thought concerning the reason why it could not be so. The same necessity--the same ever-recurring "must"--which required Him to be made like unto His brethren, required Him also to continue like them to the end. In every possible way, and by every beautiful artifice of language, has the Holy Ghost obviated

our misconception on this subject. One entire chapter (the second to the Hebrews, namely) has been written as it were of set purpose: in exceedingly emphatic terms, as the student of the original knows, it is declared that "He Himself likewise took part of the same nature with the children:" "likewise," in a sense that admits of no suspicion. And as He and His brethren, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, are originally "of one," so in continuance He abides the same; no change passed upon Him that might cause Him ever to "be ashamed to call us brethren," even in the heavenly places where we see Him in glory (Hebrews ii. 14, 11,9). So far does the Word of God go in this direction that it might seem sometimes to ally our Lord with much in our nature from which we ourselves, with Simon Peter's uninstructed zeal, might wish to exempt Him. With jealous precision guarding His holy manhood from the taint of our sin, it nevertheless so draws the picture of the Sufferer in His solitary way as to show that it is the same Jesus, the Man of sorrows, throughout. Here and there it leads us to see what we cannot understand, and to hear what it is a trial of faith to hear; and all to prove to us that the incarnation which puts on man's nature infinite honour has not a whit altered the elements of its character. He is still Man unchanged, even in glory: the first word of the angels after the ascension tells us so: "This same Jesus " (Acts i. 11). [10.]

(3.) Nor is there any mysterious result of the union that may be regarded as involving a change in both natures at once. To use a subtle distinction made by men of old: Christ is one Person "in" the two natures, without being a new Person formed "of" the two natures. As Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 341, for keeping the Saviour's Godhead and manhood so widely apart as to make Him two persons, so Eutyches was condemned at Chalcedon, A.D. 351, for confusing the two natures into one composite being, neither God nor man. It will be obvious to everyone that recoil from one error would lead towards its direct opposite. Neither Nestorius nor Eutyches would have accepted the definition just given of their respective errors; they had the purest desire; the one to preserve the reality of our Lord's human nature, the other to guard the unity of His person; but they both and perhaps equally misled their followers. Eutyches, in particular, with whom we have now to do, so suffered his theological thinking to be overwhelmed by the majesty of Christ's Divinity that he lost the manhood almost entirely, and let it be absorbed into the Godhead as a drop in the ocean. Both in his own and in his followers' hands, the heresy degenerated into the assertion of a certain composite

being, between Divine and human. The God in Christ was depressed by the very fact of this blending with the human, albeit the human element was infinitesimally small; whilst the man in Christ was elevated into an unnatural union with the Godhead, if such a word may be allowed. The result was a conglomerate, against which the decision of the Council defended the church by demanding that the two natures of Christ should be held as unchanged and unconfused. Of all the errors that haunt this Immanuel's land of theology the Eutychian is perhaps the most obvious and at the same time the most unreasonable. The more steadily it is regarded, the more repulsive does it appear in itself; and almost every precious doctrine of the Gospel withers at its touch. It literally takes away our Representative from the incarnate Person, especially after the ascension: it is not true on this theory that "there is one mediator, the man Christ Jesus." The man Christ Jesus is for ever gone. Much as we need, and struggle to secure, the unity of Christ's Person, it is not to be maintained in any such way as this. That unity is in a higher region, into which no human mind save His own can enter: a region where two wills, if indeed we say rightly two "wills," two consciousnesses, two processes of intelligence, two personalities also if rightly understood, are found belonging to one Subject, "who is over all, God blessed for ever."

3. Christian theology is shut up, therefore, to the bold confession of a belief that the Lord Christ is both God and man: not indeed God in part, and man in part, but both, and each, and either, together and interchangeably. It has always been the effort of scientific theologians to provide formulæ that should express and regulate this truth; and the result is "one of the richest, and, as I think, the most satisfactory departments of the Christian vocabulary. Here again the Scripture gives but little direct help; though it never fails to point the way to the truth, and its express statements are so clear on every side that careful attention to them all will infallibly protect our definitions from error. Certain well-known regulative hints are there which abundantly justify the decisions of the earliest Councils: giving their sure warrant to what we may term the Nicene theology concerning the Lord's Divine Sonship, to the Ephesine theology concerning His manhood, and to what may perhaps most appropriately be called the Chalcedonian theology concerning His one Person.

(1.) The four leading terms or definitive watchwords, which like a quaternion guard the sacred Person of the Lord, are simply

