

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

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Benjamin Warfield's theological study of Christ's person from the Epistle to the Hebrews, emphasizing His divine nature, true humanity, and the significance of His incarnation and atoning sacrifice.

8 Chapters

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01 - The Teaching of Paul

I. THE TEACHING OF PAUL

We begin, then, with the most didactic of the New Testament writers, the apostle Paul, and with one of the passages in which he most fully intimates his conception of the person of his Lord, Php 2:5-9. Even here, however, Paul is not formally expounding the doctrine of the Person of Christ; he is only alluding to certain facts concerning His person and action perfectly well known to his readers, in order that he may give point to an adduction of Christ's example. He is exhorting his readers to unselfishness, such unselfishness as esteems others better than ourselves, and looks not only on our own things but also on those of others. Precisely this unselfishness, he declares, was exemplified by Our Lord. He did not look upon His own things but the things of others; that is to say, He did not stand upon His rights, but was willing to forego all that He might justly have claimed for Himself for the good of others. For, says Paul, though, as we all know, in His intrinsic nature He was nothing other than God, yet He did not, as we all know right well, look greedily on His condition of equality with God, but made no account of Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient up to death itself, and that, the death of the cross. The statement is thrown into historical form; it tells the story of Christ's life on earth. But it presents His life on earth as a life in all its elements alien to His intrinsic nature, and assumed only in the performance of an unselfish purpose. On earth He lived as a man, and subjected Himself to the common lot of men. But He was not by nature a man, nor was He in His own nature subject to the fortunes of human life. By nature He was God; and He would have naturally lived as became God—'on an equality with God.' He became man by a voluntary act, 'taking no account of Himself,' and, having become man, He voluntarily lived out His human life under the conditions which the fulfillment of His unselfish purpose imposed on Him. The terms in which these great affirmations are made deserve the most careful attention. The language in which Our Lord's intrinsic Deity is expressed, for example, is probably as strong as any that could be devised. Paul does not say simply, "He was God." He says, "He was in the form of God," employing a turn of speech which throws emphasis upon Our Lord's possession of the specific quality of God. "Form" is a term which expresses the sum of those characterizing qualities which make a thing the precise thing that it is. Thus, the "form" of a sword (in this case mostly matters of external configuration) is all that makes a given piece of metal specifically a sword, rather than, say, a spade. And "the form of God" is the sum of the characteristics which make the being we call "God," specifically God, rather than some other being—an angel, say, or a man. When Our Lord is said to be in "the form of God," therefore, He is declared, in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fulness of attributes which make God God. Paul chooses this manner of expressing himself here instinctively, because, in adducing Our Lord as our example of self-abnegation, his mind is naturally resting, not on the bare fact that He is God, but on the richness and fulness of His being as God. He was all this, yet He did not look on His own things but on those of others.

It should be carefully observed also that in making this great affirmation concerning Our Lord, Paul does not throw it distinctively into the past, as if he were describing a mode of being formerly Our Lord's, indeed, but no longer His because of the action by which He became our example of unselfishness. Our Lord, he says, "being," "existing," "subsisting" "in the form of God"—as it is variously rendered. The rendering proposed by the Revised Version margin, "being originally," while right in substance, is somewhat misleading. The verb employed means "strictly 'to be beforehand,' 'to be already' so and so" (Blass, "Grammar of NT Greek," English translation, 244), "to be there and ready," and intimates the existing circumstances, disposition of mind, or, as here, mode of subsistence in which the action to be described takes place. It contains no intimation, however, of the cessation of these circumstances or disposition, or mode of subsistence; and that, the less in a case like the present, where it is cast in a tense (the imperfect) which in no way suggests that the mode of subsistence intimated came to an end in the action described by the succeeding verb (cf. the parallels, Luke 16:14, Luke 16:28; Luke 23:50; Act. 2:80; Acts 3:2; 2 Corinthians 8:17; 2 Corinthians 12:16; Galatians 1:14). Paul is not telling us here, then, what Our Lord was once, but rather what He already was, or, better, what in His intrinsic nature He is; he is not describing a past mode of existence of Our Lord, before the action he is adducing as an example took place—although the mode of existence he describes was Our Lord's mode of existence before this action—so much as painting in the background upon which the action adduced may be thrown up into prominence. He is telling us who and what He is who did these things for us, that we may appreciate how great the things He did for us are. And here it is important to observe that the whole of the action adduced is thrown up thus against this background— not only its negative description to the effect that Our Lord (although all that God is) did not look greedily on His (consequent) being on an equality with God; but its positive description as well, introduced by the "but. . . ." and that in both of its elements, not merely that to the effect (ver. 7) that 'he took no account of himself' (rendered not badly by the Authorized Version, He "made himself of no reputation"; but quite misleading by the Revised Version, He "emptied himself"), but equally that to the effect (ver. 8) that "he humbled himself." It is the whole of what Our Lord is described as doing in vs. 6-8, that He is described as doing despite His "subsistence in the form of God." So far is Paul from intimating, therefore, that Our Lord laid aside His Deity in entering upon His life on earth, that he rather asserts that He retained His Deity throughout His life on earth, and in the whole course of His humiliation, up to death itself, was consciously ever exercising self-abnegation, living a life which did not by nature belong to Him, which stood in fact in direct contradiction to the life which was naturally His. It is this underlying implication which determines the whole choice of the language in which Our Lord's earthly life is described. It is because it is kept in mind that He still was "in the form of God," that is, that He still had in possession all that body of characterizing qualities by which God is made God, for example, that He is said to have been made, not man, but "in the likeness of man," to have been found, not man, but "in fashion as a man"; and that the wonder of His servant-hood and obedience, the mark of servant-hood, is thought of as so great. Though He was truly man, He was much more than man; and Paul would not have his readers imagine that He had become merely man. In other words, Paul does not teach that Our Lord was once God but had become instead man; he teaches that though He was God, He had become also man. An impression that Paul means to imply, that in entering upon His earthly life Our Lord had laid aside His Deity, may be created by a very prevalent misinterpretation of the central clause of his statement—a misinterpretation

unfortunately given currency by the rendering of the English Revised Version: "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself," varied without improvement in the American Revised Version to: "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself." The former (negative) member of this clause means just: He did not look greedily upon His being on an equality with God; did not "set supreme store" by it (see Lightfoot on the clause). The latter (positive) member of it, however, cannot mean in antithesis to this, that He therefore "emptied himself," divested Himself of this, His being on an equality with God, much less that He "emptied himself," divested Himself of His Deity ("form of God") itself, of which His being on an equality with God is the manifested consequence. The verb here rendered "emptied" is in constant use in a metaphorical sense (so only in the New Testament: Romans 4:14; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 1 Corinthians 9:15; 2 Corinthians 9:3) and cannot here be taken literally. This is already apparent from the definition of the manner in which the "emptying" is said to have been accomplished, supplied by the modal clause which is at once attached: by "taking the form of a servant." You cannot "empty" by "taking"—adding. It is equally apparent, however, from the strength of the emphasis which, by its position, is thrown upon the "himself." We may speak of Our Lord as "emptying Himself" of something else, but scarcely, with this strength of emphasis, of His "emptying Himself" of something else. This emphatic "Himself," interposed between the preceding clause and the verb rendered "emptied," builds a barrier over which we cannot climb backward in search of that of which Our Lord emptied Himself. The whole thought is necessarily contained in the two words, "emptied Himself," in which the word "emptied" must therefore be taken in a sense analogous to that which it bears in the other passages in the New Testament where it occurs. Paul, in a word, says here nothing more than that Our Lord, who did not look with greedy eyes upon His estate of equality with God, emptied Himself, if the language may be pardoned, of Himself; that is to say, in precise accordance with the exhortation for the enhancement of which His example is adduced, that He did not look on His own things. 'He made no account of Himself,' we may fairly paraphrase the clause; and thus all question of what He emptied Himself of falls away. What Our Lord actually did, according to Paul, is expressed in the following clauses; those now before us express more the moral character of His act. He took "the form of a servant," and so was "made in the likeness of men." But His doing this showed that He did not set overweening store by His state of equality with God, and did not account Himself the sufficient object of all the efforts. He was not self-regarding: He had regard for others. Thus He becomes our supreme example of self-abnegating conduct. The language in which the act by which Our Lord showed that He was self-abnegating is described, requires to be taken in its complete meaning. He took "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men," says Paul. The term "form" here, of course, bears the same full meaning as in the preceding instance of its occurrence in the phrase "the form of God." It imparts the specific quality, the whole body of characteristics, by which a servant is made what we know as a servant. Our Lord assumed, then, according to Paul, not the mere state or condition or outward appearance of a servant, but the reality; He became an actual "servant" in the world. The act by which He did this is described as a "taking," or, as it has become customary from this description of it to phrase it, as an assumption." What is meant is that Our Lord took up into His personality a human nature; and therefore it is immediately explained that He took the form of a servant by "being made in the likeness of men." That the apostle does not say, shortly, that He assumed a human nature, is due to the engagement of his mind with the contrast which he wishes to bring out forcibly for the enhancement of his appeal to Our Lord's example,

between what Our Lord is by nature and what He was willing to become, not looking on His own things but also on the things of others. This contrast is, no doubt, embodied in the simple opposition of God and man; it is much more pungently expressed in the quantitative terms, "form of God" and "form of a servant" The Lord of the world became a servant in the world; He whose right it was to rule took obedience as His life-characteristic. Naturally therefore Paul employs here a word of quality rather than a word of mere nature; and then defines his meaning in this word of quality by a further exegetical clause. This further clause—"being made in the likeness of men"—does not throw doubt on the reality of the human nature that was assumed, in contradiction to the emphasis on its reality in the phrase "the form of a servant." It, along with the succeeding clause—"and being found in fashion as a man"—owes its peculiar form, as has already been pointed out, to the vividness of the apostle's consciousness, that he is speaking of one who, though really man, possessing all that makes a man a man, is yet, at the same time, infinitely more than a man, no less than God Himself, in possession of all that makes God God. Christ Jesus is in his view, therefore (as in the view of his readers, for he is not instructing his readers here as to the nature of Christ's person, but reminding them of certain elements in it for the purposes of his exhortation), both God and man, God who has "assumed" man into personal union with Himself, and has in this His assumed manhood lived out a human life on earth. The elements of Paul's conception of the person of Christ are brought before us in this suggestive passage with unwonted fulness. But they all receive endless illustration from his occasional allusions to them, one or another, throughout his Epistles. The leading motive of this passage, for example, reappears quite perfectly in 2 Corinthians 8:9; where we are exhorted to imitate the graciousness of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who became for our sakes (emphatic) poor—He who was (again an imperfect participle, and therefore without suggestion of the cessation of the condition described) rich—that we might by His (very emphatic) poverty be made rich. Here the change in Our Lord's condition at a point of time perfectly understood between the writer and his readers is adverted to and assigned to its motive, but no further definition is given of the nature of either condition referred to. We are brought closer to the precise nature of the act by which the change was wrought by such a passage as Galatians 4:4. We read that "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." The whole transaction is referred to the Father in fulfillment of His eternal plan of redemption, and it is described specifically as an incarnation: the Son of God is born of a woman—He who is in His own nature the Son of God, abiding with God, is sent forth from God in such a manner as to be born a human being, subject to law. The primary implications are that this was not the beginning of His being; but that before this He was neither a man nor subject to law. But there is no suggestion that on becoming man and subject to law, He ceased to be the Son of God or lost anything intimated by that high designation. The uniqueness of His relation to God as His Son is emphasized in a kindred passage (Romans 8:3) by the heightening of the designation to that of God's "own Son," and His distinction from other men is intimated in the same passage by the declaration that God sent Him, not in sinful flesh, but only "in the likeness of sinful flesh." The reality of Our Lord's flesh is not thrown into doubt by this turn of speech, but His freedom from the sin which is associated with flesh as it exists in lost humanity is asserted (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). Though true man, therefore (1 Corinthians 15:21; Romans 5:1-21; Acts 17:31), He is not without differences from other men; and these differences do not concern merely the condition (as sinful) in which men presently find themselves; but also their very origin: they are from below, He from

above—'the first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven' (1 Corinthians 15:47). This is His peculiarity: He was born of a woman like other men; yet He descended from Heaven (cf. Ephesians 4:9; John 3:13). It is not meant, of course, that already in heaven He was a man; what is meant is that even though man He derives His origin in an exceptional sense from heaven. Paul describes what He Was in heaven (but not alone in heaven) —that is to say before He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh (though not alone before this) —in the great terms of "God's Son," "God's Own Son," "the form of God," or yet again in words whose import cannot be mistaken, 'God over all' (Romans 9:5). In the last cited passage, together with its parallel earlier in the same epistle (Romans 1:3), the two sides or elements of Our Lord's person are brought into collocation after a fashion that can leave no doubt of Paul's conception of His twofold nature. In the earlier of these passages he tells us that Jesus Christ was born, indeed, of the seed of David according to the flesh, that is, so far as the human side of His being is concerned, but was powerfully marked out as the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness, that is, with respect to His higher nature, by the resurrection of the dead, which in a true sense began in His own rising from the dead. In the later of them, he tells us that Christ sprang indeed, as concerns the flesh, that is on the human side of His being, from Israel, but that, despite this earthly origin of His human nature, He yet is and abides (present participle) nothing less than the Supreme God, "God over all [emphatic], blessed forever." Thus Paul teaches us that by His coming forth from God to be born of woman, Our Lord, assuming a human nature to Himself, has, while remaining the Supreme God, become also true and perfect man. Accordingly, in a context in which the resources of language are strained to the utmost to make the exaltation of Our Lord's being clear— in which He is described as the image of the invisible God, whose being antedates all that is created, in whom, through whom and to whom all things have been created, and in whom they all subsist—we are told not only that (naturally) in Him all the fulness dwells (Colossians 1:19), but, with complete explication, that 'all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily' (Colossians 2:9); that is to say, the very Deity of God, that which makes God God, in all its completeness, has its permanent home in Our Lord, and that in a "bodily fashion," that is, it is in Him clothed with a body. He who looks upon Jesus Christ sees, no doubt, a body and a man; but as he sees the man clothed with the body, so he sees God Himself, in all the fulness of His Deity, clothed with the humanity. Jesus Christ is therefore God "manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), and His appearance on earth is an "epiphany" (2 Timothy 1:10), which is the technical term for manifestations on earth of a God. Though truly man, He is nevertheless also our "great God" (Titus 2:13).

02 - Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews

II. TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS The conception of the person of Christ which underlies and finds expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews is indistinguishable from that which governs all the allusions to Our Lord in the Epistles of Paul. To the author of this epistle Our Lord is above all else the Son of God in the most eminent sense of that word; and it is the Divine dignity and majesty belonging to Him from His very nature which forms the fundamental feature of the image of Christ which stands before his mind. And yet it is this author who, perhaps above all others of the New Testament writers, emphasizes the truth of the humanity of Christ, and dwells with most particularity upon the elements of His human nature and experience. The great Christological passage which fills chap. ii of the Epistle to the Hebrews rivals in its richness and fulness of detail, and its breadth of implication, that of Php 2:1-30. It is thrown up against the background of the remarkable exposition of the Divine dignity of the Son which occupies chap. 1 (notice the "therefore" of Php 2:1). There the Son had been declared to be "the effulgence of his (God's) glory, and the very image of his substance, through whom the universe has been created and by the word of whose power all things are held in being"; and His exaltation above the angels, by means of whom the Old Covenant had been inaugurated, is measured by the difference between the designations "ministering spirits" proper to the one, and the Son of God, nay, God itself (Php 1:8-9), proper to the other. The purpose of the succeeding statement is to enhance in the thought of the Jewish readers of the epistle the value of the salvation wrought by this Divine Saviour, by removing from their minds the offence they were in danger of taking at His lowly life and shameful death on earth. This earthly humiliation finds its abundant justification, we are told, in the greatness of the end which it sought and attained. By it Our Lord has, with His strong feet, broken out a pathway along which, in Him, sinful man may at length climb up to the high destiny which was promised him when it was declared he should have dominion over all creation. Jesus Christ stooped only to conquer, and He stooped to conquer not for Himself (for He was in His own person no less than God), but for us. The language in which the humiliation of the Son of God is in the first instance described is derived from the context. The establishment of His Divine majesty in chap. i had taken the form of an exposition of His infinite exaltation above the angels, the highest of all creatures. His humiliation is described here therefore as being "made a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:9). What is meant is simply that He became man; the phraseology is derived from Psalms 8:1-9, Authorized Version, from which had just been cited the declaration that God has made man (despite his insignificance) "but a little lower than the angels," thus crowning him with glory and honor. The adoption of the language of the psalm to describe Our Lord's humiliation has the secondary effect, accordingly, of greatly enlarging the reader's sense of the immensity of the humiliation of the Son of God in becoming man: He descended an infinite distance to reach man's highest conceivable exaltation. As, however, the primary purpose of the adoption of the language is merely to declare that the Son of God became man, so it is shortly afterward explained (Hebrews 2:14) as an entering into participation in the blood and flesh which are common to men: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." The voluntariness, the reality, the completeness of the assumption

of humanity by the Son of God, are all here emphasized. The proximate end of Our Lord's assumption of humanity is declared to be that He might die; He was "made a little lower than the angels . . . because of the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9); He took part in blood and flesh in order "that through death . . ." (Hebrews 2:14). The Son of God as such could not die; to Him belongs by nature an "indissoluble life" (Hebrews 7:16 in.). If he was to die, therefore, He must take to Himself another nature to which the experience of death were not impossible (Hebrews 2:17). Of course it is not meant that death was desired by Him for its own sake. The purpose of our passage is to save its Jewish readers from the offence of the death of Christ. What they are bidden to observe is, therefore, Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God the bitterness of death which he tasted might redound to the benefit of every man' (Hebrews 2:9), and the argument is immediately pressed home that it was eminently suitable for God Almighty, in bringing many sons into glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect (as a Saviour) by means of suffering. The meaning is that it was only through suffering that these men, being sinners, could be brought into glory. And therefore in the plainer statement of verse 14 we read that Our Lord took part in flesh and blood in order "that through death he might bring to nought him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"; and in the still plainer statement of Hebrews 2:17 that the ultimate object of His assimilation to men was that He might "make propitiation for the sins of the people." It is for the salvation of sinners that Our Lord has come into the world; but, as that salvation can be wrought only by suffering and death, the proximate end of His assumption of humanity remains that He might die; whatever is more than this gathers around this. The completeness of Our Lord's assumption of humanity and of His identification of Himself with it receives strong emphasis in this passage. He took part in the flesh and blood which is the common heritage of men, after the same fashion that other men participate in it (Hebrews 2:14); and, having thus become a man among men, He shared with other men the ordinary circumstances and fortunes of life, "in all things" (Hebrews 2:17). The stress is laid on trials, sufferings, death; but this is due to the actual course in which His life ran—and that it might run in which He became man—and is not exclusive of Other human experiences. What is intended is that He became truly a man, and lived a truly human life, subject to all the experiences natural to a man in the particular circumstances in which He lived.

It is not implied, however, that during this human life—"the days of his flesh" (v. 7)—He had ceased to be God, or to have at His disposal the attributes which belonged to Him as God. That is already excluded by the representations of chap. 1. The glory of this dispensation consists precisely in the bringing of its revelations directly by the Divine Son rather than by mere prophets (Hebrews 1:1), and it was as the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His substance, upholding the universe by the word of His power, that this Son made purification of sins (Hebrews 1:3). Indeed, we are expressly told that even in the days of the flesh, He continued still a Son (v. 8), and that it was precisely in this that the wonder lay: that though He was and remained (imperfect participle) a Son, He yet learned the obedience He had set Himself to (cf. Php 2:8) by the things which He suffered. Similarly, we are told not only that, though an Israelite of the tribe of Judah, He possessed "the power of an indissoluble life" (Hebrews 7:16 in.), but, describing that higher nature which gave Him this power as an "eternal Spirit" (cf. "spirit of holiness," Romans 1:4), that it was through this eternal Spirit that He could offer Himself without blemish unto God, a

real and sufficing sacrifice, in contrast with the shadows of the Old Covenant (Hebrews 9:14). Though a man, therefore, and truly man, sprung out of Judah (Hebrews 7:14), touched with the feeling of human infirmities (Hebrews 4:15), and tempted like as we are, He was not altogether like other men. For one thing, He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26), and, by this characteristic, He was, in every sense of the words, separated from sinners. Despite the completeness of His identification with men, He remained, therefore, even in the days of His flesh different from them and above them.

03 - Teaching of Other Epistles

III. TEACHING OF OTHER EPISTLES

It is only as we carry this conception of the person of Our Lord with us—the conception of Him as at once our Supreme Lord, to whom our adoration is due, and our fellow in the experiences of a human life—that unity is induced in the multiform allusions to Him throughout, whether the Epistles of Paul or the Epistle to the Hebrews, or, indeed, the other epistolary literature of the New Testament. For in this matter there is no difference between those and these. There are no doubt a few passages in these other letters in which a plurality of the elements of the person of Christ are brought together and given detailed mention. In 1 Peter 3:18; for instance, the two constitutive elements of His person are spoken of in the contrast, familiar from Paul, of the "flesh" and the "spirit." But ordinarily we meet only with references to this or that element separately. Everywhere Our Lord is spoken of as having lived out His life as a man; but everywhere also He is spoken of with the supreme reverence which is due to God alone, and the very name of God is not withheld from Him. In 1 Peter 1:11 His preexistence is taken for granted; in James 2:1 He is identified with the Shekinah, the manifested Jehovah—'our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory'; in Jude 1:4 He is our only Master [Despot] and Lord"; over and over again He is the Divine Lord who is Jehovah (e. g., 1 Peter 2:3, 1 Peter 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2, 2 Peter 3:18); in 2 Peter 1:1; He is roundly called "our God and Saviour." There is nowhere formal inculcation of the entire doctrine of the person of Christ. But everywhere its elements, now one and now another, are presupposed as the common property of writer and readers. It is only in the Epistles of John that this easy and unstudied presupposition of them gives way to pointed insistence upon them.

04 - Teaching of John

IV. TEACHING OF JOHN In the circumstances in which he wrote, John found it necessary to insist upon the elements of the person of Our Lord—His true Deity, His true humanity and the unity of His person—in a manner which is more didactic in form than anything we find in the other writings of the New Testament. The great depository of his teaching on the subject is, of course, the prologue to his Gospel. But it is not merely in this prologue, nor in the Gospel to which it forms a fitting introduction, that these didactic statements are found. The full emphasis of John's witness to the twofold nature of the Lord is brought out, indeed, only by combining what he says in the Gospel and in the Epistles. "In the Gospel," remarks Westcott (on John 20:31), "the evangelist shows step by step that the historic Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (opposed to mere 'flesh'); in the Epistle he re-affirms that the Christ, the Son of God, was true man (opposed to mere 'spirit'; 1 John 4:2) ." What John is concerned to show throughout is that it was "the true God" (1 John 5:20) who was "made flesh" (John 1:14); and that this 'only God' (John 1:18 Revised Version, margin "God only begotten") has truly come in . . . flesh" (1 John 4:2). In all the universe there is no other being of whom it can be said that He is God come in flesh (cf. 2 John 1:7, He that "cometh in the flesh," whose characteristic this is). And of all the marvels which have ever occurred in the marvelous history of the universe, this is the greatest—that 'what was from the beginning' (1 John 2:13-14) has been heard and gazed upon, seen and handled by men (1 John 1:1). From the point of view from which we now approach it, the prologue to the Gospel of John may be said to fall into three parts. In the first of these, the nature of the Being who became incarnate in the person we know as Jesus Christ is described; in the second, the general nature of the act we call the incarnation; and in the third, the nature of the incarnated person. John here calls the person who became incarnate by a name peculiar to himself in the New Testament—the "Logos" or 'Word." According to the predicates which he here applies to Him, he can mean by the "Word" nothing else but God Himself, "considered in His creative, operative, self-revealing, and communicating character," the sum total of what is Divine (C. F. Schmid). In three crisp sentences he declares at the outset His eternal subsistence, His eternal intercommunion with God, His eternal identity with God: 'In the beginning the Word was; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God' (John 1:1). "In the beginning," at that point of time when things first began to be (Genesis 1:1), the Word already "was." He antedates the beginning of all things. And He not merely antedates them, but it is immediately added that He is Himself the creator of all that is: 'All things were made by him, and apart from him was not made one thing that hath been made' (John 1:3). Thus He is taken out of the category of creatures altogether. Accordingly, what is said of Him is not that He was the first of existences to come into being—that 'in the beginning He already had come into being'—but that 'in the beginning, when things began to come into being, He already was.' It is express eternity of being that is asserted: "the imperfect tense of the original suggests in this relation, as far as human language can do so, the notion of absolute, supra-temporal existence" (Westcott). This, His eternal subsistence, was not, however, in isolation: "And the Word was with God." The language is pregnant. It is not merely coexistence with God that is asserted, as of two beings standing side by side, united in a local relation, or even in a common conception.

What is suggested is an active relation of intercourse. The distinct personality of the Word is therefore not obscurely intimated. From all eternity the Word has been with God as a fellow: He who in the very beginning already "was," "was" also in communion with God. Though He was thus in some sense a second along with God, He was nevertheless not a separate being from God: "And the Word was —still the eternal In some sense distinguishable from God, He was in an equally true sense identical with God. There is but one eternal God; this eternal God, the Word is; in whatever sense we may distinguish Him from the God whom He is "with," He is yet not another than this God, but Himself is this God. The predicate "God" occupies the position of emphasis in this great declaration, and is so placed in the sentence as to be thrown up in sharp contrast with the phrase "with God," as if to prevent inadequate inferences as to the nature of the Word being drawn even momentarily from that phrase. John would have us realize that what the Word was in eternity was not merely God's coeternal fellow, but the eternal God's self.

Now, John tells us that it was this Word, eternal in His subsistence, God's eternal fellow, the eternal God's self, that, as "come in the flesh," was Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2). "And the Word became flesh" (John 1:14), he says. The terms he employs here are not terms of substance, but of personality. The meaning is not that the substance of God was transmuted into that substance which we call "flesh." "The Word" is a personal name of the eternal God; "flesh" is an appropriate designation of humanity in its entirety, with the implications of dependence and weakness. The meaning, then, is simply that He who had just been described as the eternal God became, by a voluntary act in time, a man. The exact nature of the act by which He "became" man lies outside the statement; it was matter of common knowledge between the writer and the reader. The language employed intimates merely that it was a definite act, and that it involved a change in the life-history of the eternal God, here designated "the Word." The whole emphasis falls on the nature of this change in His life-history. He became flesh. That is to say, He entered upon a mode of existence in which the experiences that belong to human beings would also be His. The dependence, the weakness, which constitute the very idea of flesh, in contrast with God, would now enter into His personal experience. And it is precisely because these are the connotations of the term "flesh" that John chooses that term here, instead of the more simply denotative term "man." What he means is merely that the eternal God became man. But he elects to say this in the language which throws best up to view what it is to become man. The contrast between the Word as the eternal God and the human nature which He assumed as flesh, is the hinge of the statement. Had the evangelist said (as he does in 1 John 4:2) that the Word came in flesh,' it would have been the continuity through the change which would have been most emphasized. When he says rather that the Word became flesh, while the continuity of the personal subject is, of course, intimated, it is the reality and the completeness of the humanity assumed which is made most prominent. That in becoming flesh the Word did not cease to be what He was before entering upon this new sphere of experiences, the evangelist does not leave, however, to mere suggestion. The glory of the Word was so far from quenched, in his view, by His becoming flesh, that he gives us at once to understand that it was rather as "trailing clouds of glory" that He came. "And the Word became flesh," he says, and immediately adds: "and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The language is colored by reminiscences from the Tabernacle, in which the Glory of God, the Shekinah, dwelt. The flesh of Our Lord became, on its assumption by the Word, the Temple of God on earth (cf. John 2:19), and the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. John tells us

expressly that this glory was visible, that it was precisely what was appropriate to the Son of God as such. "And we beheld his glory," he says; not divined it, or inferred it, but perceived it. It was open to sight, and the actual object of observation. Jesus Christ was obviously more than man; He was obviously God. His actually observed glory, John tells us further, was a "glory as of the only begotten from the Father." It was unique; nothing like it was ever seen in another, And its uniqueness consisted precisely in its consonance with what the unique Son of God, sent forth from the Father, would naturally have; men recognized and could not but recognize in Jesus Christ the unique Son of God. When this unique Son of God is further described as "full of grace and truth," the elements of His manifested glory are not to be supposed to be exhausted by this description (cf. John 2:11). Certain items of it only are singled out for particular mention. The visible glory of the incarnated Word was such a glory as the unique Son of God, sent forth from the Father, who was full of grace and truth, would naturally manifest. That nothing should be lacking to the declaration of the continuity of all that belongs to the Word as such into this new sphere of existence, and its full manifestation through the veil of His flesh, John adds at the close of his exposition the remarkable sentence: 'As for God, no one has even yet seen him; God only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father—He hath declared him' (John 1:18 in.). It is the incarnate Word which is here called 'only begotten God.' The absence of the article with this designation is doubtless due to its parallelism with the word "God" which stands at the head of the corresponding clause. The effect of its absence is to throw up into emphasis the quality rather than the mere individuality of the person so designated. The adjective "only begotten" conveys the idea, not of derivation and subordination, but of uniqueness and consubstantiality: Jesus is all that God is, and He alone is this. Of this 'only begotten God' it is now declared that He "is"—not "was," the state is not one which has been left behind at the incarnation, but one which continues uninterrupted and unmodified—"into"—not merely "in"—"the bosom of the Father"—that is to say, He continues in the most intimate and complete communion with the Father. Though now incarnate, He is still "with God" in the full sense of the external relation intimated in John 1:1. This being true, He has much more than seen God, and is fully able to "interpret" God to men. Though no one has ever yet seen God, yet he who has seen Jesus Christ, "God only begotten," has seen the Father (cf. John 14:9; John 12:45). In this remarkable sentence there is asserted in the most direct manner the full Deity of the incarnate Word, and the continuity of His life as such in His incarnate life; thus He is fitted to be the absolute revelation of God to man. This condensed statement of the whole doctrine of the in-carnation is only the prologue to a historical treatise. The historical treatise which it introduces, naturally, is written from the point of view of its prologue. Its object is to present Jesus Christ in His historical manifestation, as obviously the Son of God in flesh. "These are written," the Gospel testifies, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31); that Jesus who came as a man (John 1:30) was thoroughly known in His human origin (John 7:27), confessed Himself man (John 8:40), and died as a man dies (John 19:5), was, nevertheless, not only the Messiah, the Sent of God, the fulfiller of all the Divine promises of redemption, but also the very Son of God, that God only begotten, who, abiding in the bosom of the Father, is His sole adequate interpreter. From the beginning of the Gospel onward, this purpose is pursued: Jesus is pictured as ever, while truly man, yet manifesting Himself as equally truly God, until the veil which covered the eyes of His followers was wholly lifted, and He is greeted as both Lord and God (John 20:28). But though it is the prime purpose of this Gospel to exhibit the Divinity of the man Jesus, no obscuration of His manhood is involved. It is the Deity of

the man Jesus which is insisted on, but the true manhood of Jesus is as prominent in the representation as in any other portion of the New Testament. Nor is any effacement of the humiliation of His earthly life involved. For the Son of man to come from heaven was a descent (John 3:13), and the mission which He came to fulfil was a mission of contest and conflict, of suffering and death. He brought His glory with Him (John 1:14), but the glory that was His on earth (John 17:22) was not all the glory which He had had with the Father before the world was, and to which, after His work was done, He should return (John 17:5). Here too the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. In any event, John has no difficulty in presenting the life of Our Lord on earth as the life of God in flesh, and in insisting at once on the glory that belongs to Him as God and on the humiliation which is brought to Him by the flesh. It is distinctly a duplex life which he ascribes to Christ, and he attributes to Him without embarrassment all the powers and modes of activity appropriate on the one hand to Deity and on the other to sinless (John 7:46 cf. John 14:30; 1 John 3:5) human nature. In a true sense his portrait of Our Lord is a dramatization of the God-man which he presents to our contemplation in his prologue.

05 - Teaching of the Synoptic Gospels

V. TEACHING OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS The same may be said of the other Gospels. They are all dramatizations of the God-man set forth in theoretical exposition in the prologue to John's Gospel. The Gospel of Luke, written by a known companion of Paul, gives us in a living narrative the same Jesus who is presupposed in all Paul's allusions to Him. That of Mark, who was also a companion of Paul, as also of Peter, is, as truly as the Gospel of John itself, a presentation of facts in the life of Jesus with a view to making it plain that this was the life of no mere man, human as it was, but of the Son of God Himself. Matthew's Gospel differs from its fellows mainly in the greater richness of Jesus' own testimony to His Deity which it records. What is characteristic of all three is the inextricable interlacing in their narratives of the human and Divine traits which alike marked the life they are depicting. It is possible, by neglecting one series of their representations and attending only to the other, to sift out from them at will the portrait of either a purely Divine or a purely human Jesus. It is impossible to derive from them the portrait of any other than a Divine-human Jesus if we surrender ourselves to their guidance and take off of their pages the portrait they have endeavored to draw. As in their narratives they cursorily suggest now the fulness of His Deity and now the completeness of His humanity and everywhere the unity of His person, they present as real and as forcible a testimony to the constitution of Our Lord's person as uniting in one personal life a truly Divine and a truly human nature, as if they announced this fact in analytical statement. Only on the assumption of this conception of Our Lord's person as underlying and determining their presentation, can unity be given to their representations; while, on this supposition, all their representations fall into their places as elements in one consistent whole. Within the limits of their common presupposition, each Gospel has no doubt its own peculiarities in the distribution of its emphasis. Mark lays particular stress on the Divine power of the man Jesus, as evidence of His supernatural being; and on the irresistible impression of a veritable Son of God, a Divine being walking the earth as a man, which He made upon all with whom He came into contact. Luke places his Gospel by the side of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the prominence it gives to the human development of the Divine being whose life on earth it is depicting and to the range of temptation to which He was subjected. Matthew's Gospel is notable chiefly for the heights of the Divine self-consciousness which it uncovers in its report of the words of Him whom it represents as nevertheless the Son of David, the Son of Abraham; heights of Divine self-consciousness which fall in nothing short of those attained in the great utterances preserved for us by John. But amid whatever variety there may exist in the aspects on which each lays his particular emphasis, it is the same Jesus Christ which all three bring before us, a Jesus Christ who is at once God and man and one individual person. If that be not recognized, the whole narrative of the Synoptic Gospels is thrown into confusion; their portrait of Christ becomes an insoluble puzzle; and the mass of details which they present of His life-experiences is transmuted into a mere set of crass contradictions.

06 - Teaching of Jesus

VI. TEACHING OF JESUS

1. The Johannine Jesus.—The Gospel narratives not only present us, however, with dramatizations of the God-man, according to their authors' conception of His composite person. They preserve for us also a considerable body of the utterances of Jesus Himself, and this enables us to observe the conception of His person which underlay and found expression in Our Lord's own teaching. The discourses of Our Lord which have been selected for record by John have been chosen (among other reasons) expressly for the reason that they bear witness to His essential Deity. They are accordingly peculiarly rich in material for forming a judgment of Our Lord's conception of His higher nature. This conception, it is needless to say, is precisely that which John, taught by it, has announced in the prologue to his Gospel, and has illustrated by his Gospel itself, compacted as it is of these discourses. It will not be necessary to present the evidence for this in its fulness. It will be enough to point to a few characteristic passages, in which Our Lord's conception of His higher nature finds especially clear expression. That He was of higher than earthly origin and nature, He repeatedly asserts. "Ye are from beneath," he says to the Jews (John 8:23), "I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (cf. John 17:16). Therefore, He taught that He, the Son of Man, had "descended out of heaven" (John 3:13), where was His true abode. This carried with it, of course, an assertion of preexistence; and this preexistence is explicitly affirmed: "What then," He asks, "if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (John 6:62). It is not merely preexistence, however, but eternal preexistence which He claims for Himself: "And now, Father," He prays (John 17:5), "glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (cf. John 17:24); and again, as the most impressive language possible, He declares (John 8:58 A.V.): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," where He claims for Himself the timeless present of eternity as His mode of existence. In the former of these two last-cited passages, the character of His preexistent life is intimated; in it He shared the Father's glory from all eternity ("before the world was"); He stood by the Father's side as a companion in His glory. He came forth, when He descended to earth, therefore, not from heaven only, but from the very side of God (John 8:42; John 17:8). Even this, however, does not express the whole truth; He came forth not only from the Father's side where He had shared in the Father's glory; He came forth out of the Father's very being—"I came out from the Father, and am come into the world" (John 16:28; cf. John 8:42). "The connection described is internal and essential, and not that of presence or external fellowship" (Westcott). This prepares us for the great assertion: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), from which it is a mere corollary that "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9; cf. John 8:19; John 12:45). In all these declarations the subject of the affirmation is the actual person speaking: it is of Himself who stood before men and spoke to them that Our Lord makes these immense assertions. Accordingly, when He majestically declared, "I and the Father are" (plurality of persons) "one" (neuter singular, and accordingly singleness of being), the Jews naturally understood Him to be making Himself, the person then speaking to them, God (John 10:33; cf.

John 5:18; John 19:7). The continued sameness of the person who has been, from all eternity down to this hour, one with God, is therefore fully safeguarded. His earthly life is, however, distinctly represented as a humiliation. Though even on earth He is one with the Father, yet He "descended" to earth; He had come out from the Father and out of God; a glory had been left behind which was yet to be returned to, and His sojourn on earth was therefore to that extent an obscuration of His proper glory. There was a sense, then, in which, because He had "descended," He was no longer equal with the Father. It was in order to justify an assertion of equality with the Father in power (John 10:25, John 10:29) that He was led to declare: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). But He can also declare "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Obviously this means that there was a sense in which He had ceased to be equal with the Father, because of the humiliation of His present condition, and in so far as this humiliation involved entrance into a status lower than that which belonged to Him by nature. Precisely in what this humiliation consisted can be gathered only from the general implication of many statements. In it He was a man a man who hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God' (John 8:40), where the contrast with "God" throws the assertion of humanity into emphasis (cf. John 10:33). The truth of His human nature is, however, everywhere assumed and endlessly illustrated, rather than explicitly asserted. He possessed a human soul (John 12:27) and bodily parts (flesh and blood, John 6:53 if.; hands and side, John 20:27); and was subject alike to physical affections (weariness, John 4:6; and thirst, John 19:28; suffering and death), and to all the common human emotions—not merely the love of compassion (John 13:34; John 14:21; John 15:8-13), but the love of simple affection which we pour out on "friends" (John 11:11; cf. John 15:14-15), indignation (John 11:33, John 11:38) and joy (John 15:11; John 17:13). He felt the perturbation produced by strong excitement (John 11:33; John 12:27; John 13:21), the sympathy with suffering which shows itself in tears (John 11:35), the thankfulness which fills the grateful heart (John 6:11, John 6:23; John 11:41). Only one human characteristic was alien to Him: He was without sin: "the prince of the world," He declared, "hath nothing in me" (John 14:30; cf. John 8:46). Clearly our Lord, as reported by John, knew Himself to be true God and true man in one indivisible person, the common subject of the qualities which belong to each.

2. The Synoptic Jesus.

(a) Mark 13:32. The same is true of His self-consciousness as revealed in His sayings recorded by the Synoptics. Perhaps no more striking illustration of this could be adduced than the remarkable declaration recorded in Mar. 13:32 (cf. Matthew 24:36): 'But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor yet the Son, but the Father.' Here Jesus places Himself, in an ascending scale of being, above "the angels in heaven," that is to say, the highest of all creatures, significantly marked here as super-mundane. Accordingly, He presents Himself elsewhere as the Lord of the angels, whose requests they obey: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity" (Matthew 13:41), "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31; cf. Matthew 13:49; Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38). Thus the "angels of God" (Luke 12:8-9; Luke 15:10) Christ designates as His angels, the "kingdom of God" (Matthew 12:28; Matthew 19:24; Matthew 21:31, Matthew 21:43; Mar. and Lk. often) as His Kingdom, the "elect of God" (Mark 13:20; Luke 18:7; cf. Romans 8:33; Galatians 3:12; Titus 1:1) as His elect. He is

obviously speaking in Mark 13:22 out of a Divine self-consciousness: "Only a Divine being can be exalted above angels" (B. Weiss). He therefore designates Himself by His Divine name, "the Son," that is to say, the unique Son of God (9:7; 1:11), to claim to be whom would for a man be blasphemy (Mark 14:61, Mark 14:64). But though He designates Himself by this Divine name, He is not speaking of what He once was, but of what at the moment of speaking He is: the action of the verb is present, "knoweth." He is claiming, in other words, the supreme designation of "the Son," with all that is involved in it, for His present self, as He moved among men: He is, not merely was, "the Son." Nevertheless, what He affirms of Himself cannot be affirmed of Himself distinctively as "the Son." For what He affirms of Himself is ignorance— not even the Son" knows it; and ignorance does not belong to the Divine nature which the term "the Son" connotes. An extreme appearance of contradiction accordingly arises from the use of this terminology, just as it arises when Paul says that the Jews "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8), or exhorts the Ephesian elders to "feed the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28 in.); or John Keble praises Our Lord for "the blood of souls by Thee redeemed." It was not the Lord of Glory as such who was nailed to the tree, nor have either "God" or "souls" blood to shed.

We know how this apparently contradictory mode of speech has arisen in Keble's case. He is speaking of men who are composite beings, consisting of souls and bodies, and these men come to be designated from one element of their composite personalities, though what is affirmed by them belongs rather to the other; we may speak, therefore, of the "blood of souls" meaning that these "souls," while not having blood as such, yet designate persons who have bodies and therefore blood. We know equally how to account for Paul's apparent contradictions. We know that he conceived of Our Lord as a composite person, uniting in Himself a Divine and a human nature. In Paul's view, therefore, though God as such has no blood, yet Jesus Christ who is God has blood because He is also man. He can justly speak, therefore, when speaking of Jesus Christ, of His blood as the blood of God. When precisely the same phenomenon meets us in Our Lord's speech of Himself, we must presume that it is the outgrowth of precisely the same state of things. When He speaks of "the Son" (who is God) as ignorant, we must understand that He is designating Himself as "the Son" because of His higher nature, and yet has in mind the ignorance of His lower nature; what He means is that the person properly designated "the Son" is ignorant, that is to say with respect to the human nature which is as intimate an element of His personality as is His Deity. When our Lord says, then, that "the Son knows not," He becomes as express a witness to the two natures which constitute His person as Paul is when he speaks of the blood of God, or as Keble is a witness to the twofold constitution of a human being when he speaks of souls shedding blood. In this short sentence, thus, Our Lord bears witness to His Divine nature with its supremacy above all creatures, to His human nature with its creaturely limitations, and to the unity of the subject possessed of these two natures.

(b) Other passages: Son of Man and Son of God:

All these elements of His personality find severally repeated assertions in other utterances of Our Lord recorded in the Synoptics. There is no need to insist here on the elevation of Himself above the kings and prophets of the Old Covenant (Matthew 12:41 if.), above the temple itself (Matthew 12:6), and the ordinances of the Divine Law (Matthew 12:8); or on His accent of authority in both His teaching and action, His great "I say unto you (Matthew 5:21-22), 'I will; be cleansed' (Mark 1:41; Mark 2:5; Luke 7:14); or on His separation of Himself from men in His relation to God, never

including them with Himself in an "Our Father," but consistently speaking distinctively of "my Father" (e.g., Luke 24:49) and "your Father" (e.g., Matthew 5:16); or on His intimation that He is not merely David's Son but David's Lord, and that a Lord sitting on the right hand of God (Matthew 22:44); or on His parabolic discrimination of Himself a Son and Heir from all "servants" (Matthew 21:33 if.); or even on His ascription to Himself of the purely Divine functions of the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:8) and judgment of the world (Matthew 25:31), or of the purely Divine powers of reading the heart (Mark 2:8; Luke 9:47), omnipotence (Matthew 24:30; Mark 14:62) and omnipresence (Mt. xviii 20; 28:10). These things illustrate His constant assumption of the possession of Divine dignity and attributes; the claim itself is more directly made in the two great designations which He currently gave Himself, the Son of Man and the Son of God. The former of these is His favorite self-designation. Derived from Daniel 7:13-14, it intimates on every occasion of its employment Our Lord's consciousness of being a super-mundane being, who has entered into a sphere of earthly life on a high mission, on the accomplishment of which He is to return to His heavenly sphere, whence He shall in due season come back to earth, now, however, in His proper majesty, to gather up the fruits of His work and consummate all things. It is a designation, thus, which implies at once a heavenly preexistence, a present humiliation, and a future glory; and He proclaims Himself in this future glory no less than the universal King seated on the throne of judgment for quick and dead (Mark 8:31; Matthew 25:31). The implication of Deity imbedded in the designation, Son of Man, is perhaps more plainly spoken out in the companion designation, Son of God, which Our Lord not only accepts at the hands of others, accepting with it the implication of blasphemy in permitting its application to Himself (Matthew 26:63, Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:61, Mark 14:64; Luke 22:29-30), but persistently claims for Himself both, in His constant designation of God as His Father in a distinctive sense, and in His less frequent but more pregnant designation of Himself as, by way of eminence, "the Son." That His consciousness of the peculiar relation to God expressed by this designation was not an attainment of His mature spiritual development, but was part of His most intimate consciousness from the beginning, is suggested by the sole glimpse which is given us into His mind as a child (Luke 2:49). The high significance which the designation bore to Him is revealed to us in two remarkable utterances preserved, the one by both Matthew (Matthew 11:27 if.) and Luke (Luke 10:22 if.), and the other by Matthew (Matthew 28:19).

(c) Matthew 11:27; Matthew 28:19. In the former of these utterances, Our Lord, speaking in the most solemn manner, not only presents Himself, as the Son, as the sole source of knowledge of God and of blessedness for men, but places Himself in a position, not of equality merely, but of absolute reciprocity and interpretation of knowledge with the Father. "No one," He says, "knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son . . ." varied in Luke so as to read: "No one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son . . ." as if the being of the Son were so immense that only God could know it thoroughly; and the knowledge of the Son was so unlimited that He could know God to perfection. The peculiarly pregnant employment here of the terms "Son" and "Father" over against one another is explained to us in the other utterance (Matthew 28:19). It is the resurrected Lord's commission to His disciples. Claiming for Himself all authority in heaven and on earth—which implies the possession of omnipotence—and promising to be with His followers 'always, even to the end of the world'—which adds the implications of omnipresence and omniscience—He commands them to baptize their converts 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' The precise form of the formula must be carefully observed. It does not read: 'In the names' (plural)—as if there

were three beings enumerated, each with its distinguishing name. Nor yet: 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' as if there were one person, going by a threefold name. It reads: 'In the name [singular] of the Father, and of the [article repeated] Son, and of the [article repeated] Holy Ghost,' carefully distinguishing three persons, though uniting them all under one name. The name of God was to the Jews Jehovah, and to name the name of Jehovah upon them was to make them His. What Jesus did in this great injunction was to command His followers to name the name of God upon their converts, and to announce the name of God which is to be named on their converts in the threefold enumeration of "the Father" and "the Son" and "the Holy Ghost." As it is unquestionable that He intended Himself by "the Son," He here places Himself by the side of the Father and the Spirit, as together with them constituting the one God. It is, of course, the Trinity which He is describing; and that is as much as to say that He announces Himself as one of the persons of the Trinity. This is what Jesus, as reported by the Synoptics, understood Himself to be. In announcing Himself to be God, however, Jesus does not deny that He is man also. If all His speech of Himself rests on His consciousness of a Divine nature, no less does all His speech manifest His consciousness of a human nature. He easily identifies Himself with men (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4), and receives without protest the imputation of humanity (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). He speaks familiarly of His body (Matthew 26:12, Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:8, Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19), and of His bodily parts—His feet and hands (Luke 24:39), His head and feet (Luke 7:44-46), His flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), His blood (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). We chance to be given indeed a very express affirmation on His part of the reality of His bodily nature; when His disciples were terrified at His appearing before them after His resurrection, supposing Him to be a spirit, He reassures them with the direct declaration: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having" (Luke 24:39). His testimony to His human soul is just as express: "My soul," says He, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34). He speaks of the human dread with which He looked forward to His approaching death (Luke 12:50), and expresses in a poignant cry His sense of desolation on the cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). He speaks also of His pity for the weary and hungering people (Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:2), and of a strong human desire which He felt (Luke 22:15). Nothing that is human is alien to Him except sin. He never ascribes imperfection to Himself and never betrays consciousness of sin. He recognizes the evil of those about Him (Luke 11:13; Matthew 12:34, Matthew 12:39; Luke 11:29), but never identifies Himself with it. It is those who do the will of God with whom He feels kinship (Matthew 12:50), and He offers Himself to the morally sick as a physician (Matthew 9:12). He proposes Himself as an example of the highest virtues (Matthew 11:28 *if.*) and pronounces him blessed who shall find no occasion of stumbling in Him (Matthew 11:6).

These manifestations of a human and Divine consciousness simply stand side by side in the records of Our Lord's self-expression. Neither is suppressed or even qualified by the other. If we attend only to the one class we might suppose Him to proclaim Himself wholly Divine; if only to the other we might equally easily imagine Him to be representing Himself as wholly human. With both together before us we perceive Him alternately speaking out of a Divine and out of a human consciousness; manifesting Himself as all that God is and as all that man is; yet with the most marked unity of consciousness. He, the one Jesus Christ, was to His own apprehension true God and complete man in a unitary personal life.

07 - The Two Natures Everywhere Presupposed

VII. THE TWO NATURES EVERYWHERE PRESUPPOSED

There underlies, thus, the entire literature of the New Testament a single, unvarying conception of the constitution of Our Lord's person. From Matthew where He is presented as one of the persons of the Holy Trinity (Matthew 28:19)—or if we prefer the chronological order of books, from the Epistle of James where He is spoken of as the Glory of God, the Shekinah (ii. 1)—to the Apocalypse where He is represented as declaring that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:17; Revelation 22:13), He is consistently thought of as in His fundamental being just God. At the same time from the Synoptic Gospels, in which He is dramatized as a man walking among men, His human descent carefully recorded, and His sense of dependence on God so emphasized that prayer becomes almost His most characteristic action, to the Epistles of John in which it is made the note of a Christian that He confesses that Jesus Christ has come in flesh (1 John 4:2) and the Apocalypse in which His birth in the tribe of Judah and the house of David (v. 5; Revelation 22:16), His exemplary life of conflict and victory (Revelation 3:21), His death on the cross (Revelation 11:8) are noted, He is equally consistently thought of as true man. Nevertheless, from the beginning to the end of the whole series of books, while first one and then the other of His two natures comes into repeated prominence, there is never a question of conflict between the two, never any confusion in their relations, never any schism in His unitary personal action; but He is obviously considered and presented as one, composite indeed, but undivided personality. In this state of the case not only may evidence of the constitution of Our Lord's person properly be drawn indifferently from every part of the New Testament, and passage justly be cited to support and explain passage without reference to the portion of the New Testament in which it is found, but we should be without justification if we did not employ this common presupposition of the whole body of this literature to illustrate and explain the varied representations which meet us cursorily in its pages, representations which might easily be made to appear mutually contradictory were they not brought into harmony by their relation as natural component parts of this one unitary conception which underlies and gives consistency to them all. There can scarcely be imagined a better proof of the truth of a doctrine than its power completely to harmonize a multitude of statements which without it would present to our view only a mass of confused inconsistencies. A key which perfectly fits a lock of very complicated wards can scarcely fail to be the true key.

08 - Formulation of the Doctrine

VIII. FORMULATION OF THE DOCTRINE

Meanwhile the wards remain complicated. Even in the case of our own composite structure, of soul and body, familiar as we are with it from our daily experience, the mutual relations of elements so disparate in a single personality remain an unplumbed mystery, and give rise to paradoxical modes of speech, which would be misleading, were not their source in our duplex nature well understood. We may read, in careful writers, of souls being left dead on battlefields, and of everybody's immortality. The mysteries of the relations in which the constituent elements in the more complex personality of Our Lord stand to one another are immeasurably greater than in our simpler case. We can never hope to comprehend how the infinite God and a finite humanity can be united in a single person; and it is very easy to go fatally astray in attempting to explain the interactions in the unitary person of natures so diverse from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that so soon as serious efforts began to be made to give systematic explanations of the Biblical facts as to Our Lord's person, many one-sided and incomplete statements were formulated which required correction and complementing before at length a mode of statement was devised which did full justice to the Biblical data. It was accordingly only after more than a century of controversy, during which nearly every conceivable method of construing and misconstruing the Biblical facts had been proposed and tested, that a formula was framed which successfully guarded the essential data supplied by the Scriptures from destructive misconception. This formula, put together by the Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D., declares it to have always been the doctrine of the church, derived from the Scriptures and Our Lord Himself, that Our Lord Jesus Christ is "truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, Only-begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ." There is nothing here but a careful statement in systematic form of the pure teaching of the Scriptures; and therefore this statement has stood ever since as the norm of thought and teaching as to the person of the Lord. As such, it has been incorporated, in one form or another, into the creeds of all the great branches of the church; it underlies and gives their form to all the allusions to Christ in the great mass of preaching and song which has accumulated during the centuries; and it has supplied the background of the devotions of the untold multitudes who through the Christian ages have been worshippers of Christ.

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