

ARTICLE VIII.

THE PROBLEM OF CHRIST'S PERSON IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY.

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THE doctrine of the Person of Christ is always central and always vital. It is central and vital to the Scriptures, for they fall helplessly apart without him as their ground of unity and being; to the church, for her power lies in the idea of Jesus, and in the vitality of Jesus, the efficiency of which is largely mediated, measured, and molded by the idea; to philosophy, for Jesus Christ, as the supreme revelation of God in personality, is the supreme witness to personality in God; and to the progress of the race, for the heart-throb of Jesus is the dynamic of all true advance in purity, justice, and love. But to-day, especially, the doctrine is vital because of the decay of the principle of human authority. We respect the teachings of the past, but with Peter we turn to the Christ, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The changed, and changing, attitude of men toward the Scriptures, also accentuates the problem. As they debate and question, and the results range from unbroken faith to almost complete abandonment, men turn with eagerness to the central Figure, who commands their admiration, their love, and their confidence, and who is indeed the Soul of the Scriptures and the Word within the word.

More evidently vital than ever before since the first ages, this central doctrine necessarily has its phases peculiar to our own time. The Christ is the same; but light, shade, and

atmosphere vary. The Christ of this century has different features, a different expression, perhaps different dimensions from the Christ of any former time. His problem is a different problem, easier of solution in some ways, and for that reason harder in some others.

Among the forces which modify it is our larger conception of the universe and of humanity, both in space and time. This means what has been called a "larger Christ,"—a Christ of longer and wider activity than some ages, at least, have recognized; a Christ more satisfactory to the conscience, the heart, and the imagination, but more difficult to handle with our logical and exegetical tools.

The rise and conquering march of the evolutionary hypothesis, not accepted by us all, but profoundly felt by every one, is, for many, another modifying element. Where can we fit Christ into the evolutionary scheme? Can the Unclassifiable be classified? If he can be fitted in, does not his unique distinction cease? If, being unique, he be somehow fitted in, is he not a break, an intrusion, an irruption? At first sight the theory would seem to be a definite and decisive classification of Jesus in the ranks of mere humanity, but it might not be hard to understand that Jesus could occupy a threefold place in the scheme. He could be the constitutive ideal, "the pattern on the mount," come down to walk with us upon the earth. In the realm of the spirit the vision is the most effective shaping force. "He that hath this hope set on Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure." He could be also the superintending intelligence, without which the process would surely go astray, and which is steadily directing the course of things that life may grow from less to more, from the earthly to the heavenly. And more than this, he could be the evolutionary force, the power which involves what is evolved, which trans-

forms the body, and the soul, of our humiliation into the image of the body, and the spirit, of his glory, even by the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. Completely rejecting evolution, it cannot affect our view of Christ. Accepting little or much, it may enhance his glory, as more emphatically the One through whom, and unto whom, all things were created, and in whom all things consist.

Another factor is the spread of idealism in its more spiritualistic forms. The trend away from materialism, the tendency to interpret the universe in terms of intelligence, self-consciousness, will, and holiness, that is, of personality; the unification of the universe in God; the increasing recognition that the face of man's spirit answers back to the face of God as a son's to his Father's; the conception that the formative purpose of the universe is spiritual, that in the last analysis all things that are, are in some way the bodyings forth, not essential to him, but the fact essential to them, of the one infinite Spirit; the freedom of this Spirit in the use and form of his manifestations,—all these things make conceivable, credible, one may say inevitable, the objectification of the Eternal Reason, the Eternal Love, and the Eternal Holiness, in a tangible form, expressed in terms level to our understandings and satisfactory to our hearts, not breaking in against law, but when the fullness of time was come, gently breaking out through law, by the power of an inward and an endless life. And just as the deity of the Son and the Spirit are the only effective antidotes for pantheism, so the reaction from materialistic pantheism leads the mind back to a God sufficient for himself by the fullness of his internal and eternal distinctions of being, a One who is not only a Unit, but a Unity.

Perhaps the most powerful modifying force is not, like these, a conception, an hypothesis, or a philosophical system; but it is a habit and temper of mind, with many phases, in some ways very admirable and in others hardly so to be considered. It is a spirit of impatience with scholasticism, bare metaphysics, wire-drawn distinctions. The mind has grown weary with the strifes of the dialecticians, the attempts of the theologians to stretch finite systems to cover infinite truth, with the resulting expedients of piecing out gaps of thought with mere words, and the effort to analyze life so minutely that between the bones and muscles and cells the life itself has somehow escaped. The modern spirit takes things "by and large." It looks for vitality. It hungers for reality. Like Sam Jones, it "loves religion, but it hates theology." Some very good things can be said of this tendency. One likes its freedom and independence. One approves of its choice of a Christ not understood, but known and loved, rather than a Christ mapped out like a manikin, and as dead and as distant. One feels a generous sympathy for some Samson of thought whose swelling muscles break the fethering withes of the philosophical Philistines, though he fracture a few of the laws of logic along with the sophisms. Much metaphysics is, no doubt, mere logomachy. The idealist may have his well-founded sneer at the "sense-bound," but an hour in the open-air contact with things that live will correct a deal of metaphysics and is helpful in testing any. But this modern temper of mind is apt to blind itself to the only real, the spiritually real; in its recoil from hard-and-fast scholasticism, it projects itself into a cloud region as metaphysical as the other, but with an added vagueness and formlessness; in its flight from a metaphysical Jesus, it constructs one who is dangerously near being a merely physical Jesus; in its repugnance to undue inquiry, it stops

short at an intellectual indolence, whose end is mental and spiritual atrophy. It seeks a larger Christ: it get a Christ who is lax and limp. In its condemnation of metaphysics, it visits upon a most helpful, an altogether essential, thing the reproach which belongs only to a wrong method in the use of it. Metaphysics is simply the attempt to get at the inner reality and relations of things. The mind can no more dispense with it than the body can dispense with the effort to adapt itself to its environment, and find its footing and its balance amid the forces that play about it: we must philosophize. The only question is whether we will philosophize manfully, diligently, fairly, and modestly, or lazily, vaguely, insincerely, and arrogantly. But we must make reasonable to our own minds the faith that is in us; we must establish definite capitals, if we cannot always precisely define frontiers; and if we are to put down on our maps great *terrae incognitae*, it must be only when we are satisfied that they are at present or forever unexplorable, which is almost as good as exploration. Our minds demand it. Our spiritual life demands it. If reason no longer is at the base of our religion, reality has left it unawares as well. Smother the intellect, and the spirit dies. Jesus himself demands it. His challenge is for all time. "Who do ye say that I am?" "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" It is no true adoration, with vague and sentimental phrases to bow down before him in a worship that knows not what it worships; it is as empty to him as it is bound to prove at the last to the worshiper. Better, like Thomas, insist on the full thrust of the hand, and say at last, "My Lord and my God!"

How, let us now inquire, have these forces and tendencies, and the resultants of another century of research and philosophy, modified for us the problem of the Person of Christ? In entering upon our answer, it is fair to state that the stand-

point of the writer is that of the integrity and the substantial accuracy—this is a studied understatement—of the Gospel narratives, including the Fourth, and of the New Testament writers in general, in their representations and views of the person and the work of the Master. If these data fail us, where shall we look for the materials of construction? In so far as some modern research and philosophy has swung clear from the historic Christ and constructed an ideal one, the problem of Christ's Person as it has agitated the church in the past, has ceased to exist. Whatever his "value" for our religious consciousness may be, he is man, pure and simple; and the chief problems now are, how to account upon that meager hypothesis for the mighty impulse of his personality through the ages, and how to save for ourselves a religious experience of Christianity, while emptying it of the fundamental facts on which that experience is based.

Our problem, however, recognizes these facts, and endeavors to relate them. It is therefore the problem of an analysis and a synthesis, involving additional analyses and syntheses, running at last into the depths of absolute being. Under the analysis two questions demand answer. To the first, "Was Jesus man?" many ages have wavered in their answer, but not ours. Clear, definite, decided, is the reply. "*Ecce homo*," not in the spirit of Pilate, but in the spirit of a humanity that has found a brother, is our cry to-day. Docetism may masquerade in strange shapes, but docetism has no word for this generation in Jesus' case, except as it may apply to all men. We have analyzed Jesus,—soul, body, and spirit,—not quantitatively, but qualitatively; and, whatever else we have discovered, we have found him flesh and blood with us, sharing infirmities, sorrows, joys, experiences, weakness, all but sin.

The second question implied in the analysis, "Is Jesus God?" the age cannot be expected to answer as boldly and positively as the other. Man is more easily recognized than God. Mental and spiritual prepossessions affect our judgment. Man has no measure to map out God, and may fear he is striking only a pocket of deity, instead of the mother lode. But these facts are pretty well agreed upon: In the analysis of Jesus we find at first the elements of pure humanity. Perhaps at first, with most of his earlier disciples, that is all we recognize; but soon we discover an unclassifiable constituent, which exerts strange and wonderful effects. He is a man, plainly. But, plainly, he is a man *plus*. *Plus* what? And *plus* how much? *Plus* purity beyond all; *plus* the God-consciousness beyond all; *plus* insight; *plus* power; *plus* love; *plus* a self-assertion at which we cannot grow offended; *plus* an unconsciousness of sin that seems not blindness but impartial self-appraisal; *plus* a demand for submission which we are not compelled to obey, but we cannot deny; *plus*,—what shall we say?—something that grips us with the compelling and mastering power of a being whose right it is to rule, and rule all, and forces us down upon our knees in an ecstasy of love and adoration, as though that were the place for us, and no other place could be, or be desired! And, strangely enough, the reading of a book by a wild English mutineer, by a Japanese who picks it up water-soaked upon his country's coast, by a lifelong unbeliever, and these after twenty centuries, brings the same results that contact with him did with men of his day: his face appears, grows, shines, glows, burns itself *into* the heart, which henceforth is his forever!

What is this element we find in this man? Where else in all the universe is there a quality, and a drawing, and a compulsion, and a mastery like this? Only in one place. Not in

man, not in angel, not in seraph—up to where he sits who in love and truth and power is above all; and we exclaim, with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Perfectly showing forth his every quality, of no other substance. the express image of his person. At our impulse to worship, every other being is fain to say, with the angel of the Apocalypse, and our enlightened judgment confirms them, "See thou do it not. Worship God." If docetism is forever fled, Arianism has gone with it forever. God, or man, or God-man, but nothing between. It is not that our age has dismissed from its thoughts, as it undoubtedly has, the idea of intermediate ranks of being, a thing which it has had no scriptural and no rational right to do, but it is that the tracing up of Jesus leads us to those qualities which inhere in God, and in God alone. If you ask the believing men of this time as to the quality of Godhood in Jesus, there will be but little divergence. As to the quantity, they will differ: "All the fullness of the Godhead bodily," "divine," "divine-human," "God manifest in the flesh," "God personalized in man," "all of God a human life can hold," "the human life of God," "the eternal Humanity in God revealed in terms of space and time,"—but in them all will run one central core, God!

To this point our way has led us far and high, but the task has been simple. The supreme problem is the synthesis, with the related questions to which it gives rise. These are of two kinds,—those which concern the internal relations of the Divine Being, and his relation to the universe; and that which concerns the relation of the divine and the human in Christ.

For the first class, our modern thought, where it does not impatiently or modestly decline the task, has, as it seems to me, very little to offer in the way of solution, but somewhat more in the way of suggestion and consolation. The attempts

to explain the double life of the Logos seem like a darkening of counsel by words without knowledge. To juggle omniscience into ignorance is beyond our utmost dialectic. A little God-stuff squeezed into humanity, like paint out of an artist's tube, will not answer the question as to the world-activity of the Logos during the Incarnation, or do justice to the reality and tremendous meaning of the Humiliation. The distinctions in the being of the Godhead are made so clear by a study of Christ's person that we cannot find refuge in a vaguer doctrine of the Trinity, from the questions of the relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit during the earthly life. The fact is that here we are dealing with relations and processes essentially beyond our depth; we touch the abysses of deity, which none can fathom,—save the Father, who alone knoweth the Son; and the Son, who alone knoweth the Father; and the Spirit, who alone knoweth the deep things of God. And that these difficulties do not arise, as some might suggest, from the unreality of the whole situation, but from the incapacity of our thought, and that we can consistently and comfortably hold to the material facts, attested as they are by Scripture and experience, while we confess our utter bafflement as to processes and explanations, our modern thought assists us to understand by assuring us that the same mists confront us whenever we come close to any of the fundamentals of being. Over the nature of reality, the problem of identity and difference, especially the process of becoming, hangs the same baffling mystery. "No problem," says an acute modern writer, "is raised by the Incarnation that is not raised in an acuter and less soluble form by creation, whether considered as an event in time or an existence in space."

There remains one problem, however, which comes more nearly within our reach, since it concerns the meeting-place of

the human and the divine. Even here, the aid of our modern thinking might be expected to be suggestive and tentative rather than decisive; but we may fairly expect it to render some assistance. A wholly comprehensible Jesus could not be a revelation of the Father, but a wholly incomprehensible Jesus could be no revelation to men; and it is fair to suppose that, with deeper and juster views of both God and man, we could not, indeed, penetrate entirely the mysterious depths of his being, but gain a somewhat clearer view of the nature of the God-man.

Simplicity, naturalness, and comparative comprehensibility are, in fact, the contributions of our day toward this problem of Christology. This is not merely because our habit of mind rejects anything that looks like carpenter work or artificial complexity; it is rather because, beneath the analysis at the surface, which differentiates the things related, we have penetrated to the synthesis at the depths, where the roots of human being are entwined with the divine. The world is almost infinitely complex to-day, the variety of the forms of life and force we are discovering is continually enlarging; and yet we are steadily pressing our way, both in science and philosophy, to an underlying unity, and that a unity of force and mind. We are discovering that all higher life forms are but combinations and adaptations of the single cell; the barriers that have hidden from us the one ultimate form of matter are steadily breaking down, till it seems that one step more would bring us into the holy of holies of ultimate matter; and when the ontologist, with ever-increasing confidence, proclaims the one substance and ground of being, it is not strange that our conceptions everywhere should be pushing on to a greater simplicity and naturalness. Things are not made; they grow from the indwelling life, the one life. The complicated creeds must

vanish. The Christ article of Chalcedon is a marvel of definition, of balancing, of fencing, in more senses than one; but the Christ of to-day is not the Christ of Chalcedon. He is at one time a simpler and a profounder Christ,—simpler because he is profounder, and profounder because he is simpler.

In the twentieth-century Christ, for example, there is no balance of contrasted natures, as in the old symbols. By our whole atmosphere we are forbidden to see in Jesus Christ a double being. He is not simply a unity; he is, as much as any other man, a unit. It is not natural nowadays to say, "The divine in Jesus acted thus, and the human acted thus." The Scripture forbids this, as we now see; for there is no hint of opposition, balance, or division in the Bible account of the nature of Christ. There is debate, there is struggle between opposing forces; but it is precisely the same struggle as in every human breast. There is much more evidence of two natures in the average man than in the Christ. The words and acts of Jesus reveal a unity absolutely unique; there is neither two consciousnesses, nor two wills, nor two distinct natures. It is not from the Scripture, but from the necessities of theology, that that conception takes rise.

Furthermore, in the Christ who is consistent with the thinking of to-day, I venture to say there is no real union of two natures into one. Here is not merely a man filled with God, in whom God is dwelling. This falls short of the declaration of many scriptures, and it is not true *to* the entirety of Christ's own testimony as to his being and his inner life. Neither is there here God appearing in a man, for the texts that speak of the appearing are more than balanced by the texts that declare the being. He who is manifested in the flesh has also come in the flesh, but by becoming flesh. Neither is there here a man united to God, nor God united to human nature.

The union of the divine and human, I venture again to say, is not found in the Scriptures, and cannot be discovered in the consciousness of Jesus as that is recorded in his words. It is a theological inference from the felt deity and *the certain humanity of our Lord. There is only one passage, so far as I have discovered, that would even seem to teach the union of the two natures, that in Heb. ii. 14 *seq.* But the true rendering is not, "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham"; but rather, as in the Standard Revision, "Not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham." And the teaching of the fourteenth verse is not that he shared in humanity, but that he share^d with humanity in the taking of flesh and blood! "Flesh and blood" is not humanity: it is the imperfect and hampering home of humanity as it is now, the symbol and instrument of our weakness and entanglement, the bodily organism as broken down and corrupted by sin, and so essentially mortal. This it is that cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This it is that must be transformed from the body of our humiliation into the body of his glory. And this, without its actual sinful taint, but with its weakness and imperfection, "in all points like . . . yet without sin," "the captain of our salvation," assumed in order that "in all things he might be made like unto his brethren," and "might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Christ possessed true deity and true humanity; but he possessed them not by union of, but by the genesis of the one into the other, yet without the loss of the core of identity. The word is not "joined himself to," it is "became." Jesus Christ is not two natures united in one being. He is one being in two aspects, both of them real, but one of them the fundamental and causative, the other the derived, the instrumental

and expressive,—in his essence, God; in his mode of life, his enveloping organism, his phenomenal, or perhaps better his relational, life, man. He is not God appearing what he is not, that is, man; he is God appearing what he has become. He is not a union of two natures: he is one nature evermore producing the other, which is not yet another, but itself under other conditions. In other words, the relation is not docetic, it is not duophysite, it is not simply kenotic: it is genetic, union by genesis. The scriptural formula about which the Christology of the future will center is John's statement, "The Word became flesh." This will not compass it all; for even John's view of Christ—rich and full and mature, the product of his deep experience and lofty thought, the high-water mark of apostolic teaching, both in time and significance—must be supplemented by all the rays caught from the other reporters of Jesus. "The Word became flesh," that is, with Fairbairn, "visible, mortal humanity," or, still better, "a visible, mortal man"; "became," not a mere equivalent of "took upon him the form," "was found in fashion," "shared in flesh and blood"; for these alone might seem to be mere appearances or superficial union, and both the Scripture writers and Christ himself bear witness to him as a man pure and absolute. With Paul, he is "himself man, Christ Jesus"; with Peter, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man"; and he himself asks, "Why do ye seek to slay me, a man?" "Became flesh,"—a process whose measure, method, and results are suggested partially by John's "come in the flesh," Hebrews' "made like unto his brethren," Paul's "manifested in the flesh," "in the likeness of sinful flesh," "becoming in the likeness of men," "born of a woman," "emptied himself," but not completely by any or all of these: "became."

"Became flesh," not ceasing entirely or essentially to be God, since by no becoming can one, especially God, change his essence. This is indicated by the whole trend of John's Gospel and Epistle, whose text is, "We beheld his glory." It is indicated by Christ's own sense of timeless identity, "Before Abraham was, I am"; and of unbroken central unity, "I and the Father are one"; and of continued heavenly consciousness, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing"; and of indwelling divine power, "the Father abiding in me, he doeth the works." When the pre-incarnate Logos emptied himself, he did not empty himself of himself. Paul's *ἐκένωσεν* is an adoring hyperbole. There was something left within the empty Logos, even the Logos. We have wondered why the synoptists have all recorded the Transfiguration scene in language that reveals the deep impression it made on all who saw it, and John, the most sympathetic and perceptive eye-witness, has not. The fact is, that John's whole Gospel is his story of the Transfiguration, of the flashing out through form and face and word and act of Jesus, of the divine glory in him, gleaming forth, not in a whiteness which dazzled the eye of the flesh, but in a whiteness of moral splendor and divine power, breaking through the thin envelope which for many veiled, but for those who had eyes to see, as John was continually suggesting, was really unveiling the divine within.

To this theory, or doctrine, which from one angle we may call the generation of the human nature by the divine, and from another the expression of the divine in the forms of the human, we are greatly assisted by both metaphysics and psychology when they suggest an abandonment of the thought of "human nature" as a something which can exist apart from real, although it may be latent personality. "Nature" is

nothing unless it is in something. We have passed out of sight of the old realism. There is no immaterial stuff we call a "nature." This may seem an airy way of sweeping off the table the ontology of centuries; but if "human nature" is anything, it is either the sum of the qualities observed in that aggregation of beings we call humanity, and constructed by our judgment, comparison, and imagination into a scientific concept, a mental composite picture, to which there is nowhere any one actual thing corresponding, or else it is the ideal conceived in the mind of God. There was not a mass of formless undefined human stuff from which, to use a boldly crude figure, a certain portion was cut off and shaped into personality, and infused with the divine, or united with the divine. There is no humanity till there is a man. There is no divinity outside of God.

Present-day thought assists us still more by suggesting the similarity, or even the identity, between the divine and the human. Similarity is essential likeness of being; identity is essential oneness. According to the first, man is *homoiousion* with God; according to the second, he is *homoousion*. Either form assists toward our solution. The assistance may take the form of monism, which makes man a self-expression of God. Hence God in Christ is simply God revealing himself, expressing himself in human life. He expresses himself in the physical universe to the senses, to the intellect, to the imagination. He expresses himself imperfectly in sinful man. He expressed himself perfectly in the sinless Jesus. The incarnation is simply a phase of the self-expression of God in the universe, the highest phase, the phase in which all the others find their culmination, their significance, and their ground; and the problems of the Incarnation are phases of the problems of the self-limitations of God when he comes into relation with

'the derived and phenomenal world in the way of self-expression. Helpful as it is, the theory has dangers, which must be sharply guarded against. In unskilled hands—there be those who say that even in skilled hands—it reaches perilously near to pantheism; and, most fatal if this be real, it apparently fails to do justice to the uniqueness of the character and the consciousness of Jesus. Plainly he never feels that he is divine because he is the loftiest peak of humanity. He is the descent of God to humanity. "I am come down from heaven," "that they might have life."

Or it may take the form of idealism. Jesus Christ is God's objectification of his ideal for humanity in human life; and that ideal having been a part of God's thought, the highest thought of God through all eternity, and God's thought being in a sense himself, Jesus Christ is God manifesting in time and space and under the conditions of human life the eternally human in himself. When he said, "Let us make man in our own image and after our likeness," it was the archetypal Man in the Godhead who furnished the model of creation, and who appeared in actual life in Galilee and Judæa and Samaria, that he might bring the power of that realized ideal to bear upon our minds and hearts. Profound as is the truth here contained, there seems a certain lack of substance in the conception as it stands alone, a certain danger of mistaking thought-existences for real existences. But it yields its contribution to our theory, especially if, with Fairbairn, we add to it in the terms of ethical and emotional relationships, and say that Jesus Christ is the objectification of the eternally filial in the being of the Godhead.

May we not practically combine all these with an additional thought, by holding, not an essential oneness of being between God and man, but an essential similarity, combined with the

human dependence upon the divine, and the continuous divine generation of the human? God is not man: man is not God. But man is like God. Man has some of God's attributes. God has all of man's immaterial attributes. There is not, in their inner nature, any essential antithesis between God and man. It is strange that any writer should have said that the Old Testament never rose to this conception, when almost the first breath of revelation declares it; for if to be made in God's image is not to be essentially like him, it is hard to imagine what words could express it. God is a spirit: man is a spirit. God has intellect, will, feeling: man has them. God has self-consciousness, self-determination: man has them. God has knowledge and power without limits: man has them within limits. God is self-derived: man is God-derived. God is infinite in all these things: man is, in all these things, finite-God is holy by virtue of his self-affirming purity: man is not, but may be holy, by virtue of the communication of the holiness of God. God is in no necessary relation to a bodily organism: man, to be complete, seems to be. He is a spirit dwelling in such an organism, of a certain model, powers, and limitations. This spirit is more than the tenant of the body; it is the source of being for the man; it generates the organism. In its relation to the body, to the outer world, and to the world of thought, this immaterial part of man is known as the *pneuma*: in its relations to God, and hence to the roots of being, it is known as the *psuchē*. The *pneuma*, like the *sarx*, is derived from the parents, and eventually from God: "the son of Adam, the son of God." But there is also a direct preservation by God which amounts to continuous creation; so that, mediately and immediately, the soul is deriving its being from God. A human *pneuma* differs from God, in extent of power and knowledge, by its lack of self-derived holiness, power, and

existence, and fullness of love, but is essentially similar. A *pneuma* differing from God in one or two points less than men, and unentangled with a human bodily organism, might be an angel or a seraph, *pace* the modern Sadducees who can believe in an atom, but not in an archangel. The Logos became a man, therefore, by stripping off some of the God-attributes and entering into relations with the bodily organism, and incurring all the liabilities and consequences thereunto appertaining, except actual sin. If he had similarly stripped himself of the attributes which differentiate God from angels and entered into an angelic organism, whatever that may be, he would have become an angel; but, verily, not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. He did not strip off all the God-attributes, or he would have become only man, and his coming would have been of no divine significance, more than that of every other good man, which has indeed a divine significance, but not that of Jesus. Here is the weakness of some of the kenotic theories, which leave in him nothing of the divine. Becoming man, he did not essentially unbecome God. He became flesh so far as to become truly man, and to make his experience and his example valid for the human conditions; but the essential deity throbbed within,—we cannot say how far,—and generated an unfailing victory, a spotless moral glory, and a divine power to bless, in the man Christ Jesus.

The Logos became a human *pneuma*, the generating force and the animating personality of a man. Hence this human *pneuma*, being in relations with a human *sarx*, was also a human *psuchē*, and hence the perfect humanity, and the absolute simplicity, of the being of Jesus.

It cannot be denied that this theory has its own unexplored remainders, and its own objections. "Is it not really docetism?"

it may be asked. But we place our finger on the word "became," and insist that to have the qualities of a man, and to live under the conditions of a man, is to be a man. Whatever has the arrangement of the molecules of gold and the reaction of gold, is gold. "Is it not Monarchianism?" No, for it insists on the absolute reality of the human, even while it teaches that the human is indeed a mode of the divine. Does the theory allow sufficient closeness of identification with the race to supply, first, efficient sympathy, example, help; and, secondly, an equitable basis of atonement? The Logos becoming a man is a new man, an ideal man, a man outside of this poor fallen humanity. And so he had been if he had been only man, and had been as man, absolutely a new creation. But God sent forth his Son, born of a woman. He put himself, with the divine tides of love and power throbbing back of him, into the human organism; he took the physical inheritance of the race; he subjected himself from his birth to the influence of the hereditary and environing ideas of humanity in general, and of his own Jewish race in particular. The highest conceivable sympathy and helpfulness is found in this conception. Complete identification in origin, and in manner and matter of thought, is too complete for understanding and for help. He who has never been in any but a yellow world does not know yellow. With a keenness intershot with the divine, with a power of perception so much the greater because of this very sinlessness, he put himself into these conditions, to understand and sympathize as no one could but one who was at once alike and different, a high priest tempted, but without sin.

But does this identify Jesus with the race closely enough for a basis of atonement? Was he one with us so fully that he could become for us logically and properly the Great Penitent? It may be answered that, in becoming a man, he took upon

himself its conditions ; and one of these conditions was, and is, liability to law. The race was under law. To be born of a woman was to be born under law. An analogy, which cannot, however, be pressed, might be found in the case of a son of a slave woman by her master : he shares in the liabilities of the race into which he has been born. It was at the call of an infinite and holy love and by an act of holy power, that the Son of God entered into our race ; but in doing so he subjected himself to all the conditions. But is there not a forced transfer here, where the divine-become-human cannot strictly be held accountable? That we may not only concede, but claim. If he could strictly be held accountable, he could not make atonement for any but his own sin. There must be some gulf over which the substitute must pass from his own original unaccountability into the place where he stands for the race. He must be at one with them, or he cannot bear their sin. He must be distinct from them, or he cannot bear it away. It is the miracle of the atonement. What we need is such a sufficient connection with the race as shall make him one of them, and such a distinction as shall make his offering a real substitution. On other theories of the atonement than the substitutionary or the ethical, this difficulty greatly lessens or disappears.

It may be objected that, if liability to law is a human condition, so also is sinfulness ; but not in its essence. Liability to sin is such a human condition, and this in the sinless is liability to temptation. This of course is the very source and center of the Son's approach to men, the spring of his power to help. Without that, the human life of God would have been, as far as we are concerned, a mere simulacrum of succor. As it was, he descended from the lofty seat which no temptation could assail ; divested himself of the divine armor against temptation ; put himself into a human body ; entangled him-

self amid the meshes of this fleshy organism; put himself into the human conditions of weakness and ignorance, into just those surroundings in which others, as we say, inevitably go astray; steadily refused help for himself other than any man might have, though in a sense it was never out of reach of his hand; and so met and overcame, not as God, for that would have been a light victory, but as man. So only could He be the File Leader of our salvation, the great High Priest who is able to succor them that are tempted.

The theory is not unassailable; but it is scriptural, not importing unnecessarily abstruse or unwarranted ideas. It avoids the error of docetism, for it teaches a genuine reality. It escapes the complicated artificiality of Chalcedon, which makes the Person of Christ, not the sublime and holy mystery it must ever remain after our best attempts to understand it, but an infinite and insoluble conundrum, from whose denials and balanced antitheses the heart recoils in hunger for a living Christ. It avoids the one extreme of the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum*, whereby man becomes God, and the other extreme of the kenotics, whereby God becomes only man. It does justice to the grandeur of God and the dignity of man. It adequately recognizes the man Christ Jesus, and the eternal Word who tabernacled among us. It meets the demand for vitality and simplicity, is in accord with the philosophy of becoming,—and it has difficulties enough of its own to relieve it of the charge of being too easy a solution.

The attempt to understand Jesus Christ, to analyze the cause of his effect on us, is not presumptuous, it is reverent obedience to his command. It is the condition of a living faith, for the process of life for the church is a perpetual and personal rediscovery of Jesus. Neither is it dangerous, if we are careful to preserve the personal contact; but rather, as

with the disciples, the lines of his face, falling steadily on the sensitive plates of loving hearts and inquiring minds, the one as necessary as the other, will assume greater depth and distincter form and diviner meaning, until we, who perhaps had begun with "teacher" or "Messiah" or a theological Christ, shall bow down before the living Son of God, as that face, "rather than decomposing, grows, becomes our Universe that feels and knows!"

To the first age it was given to experience the Christ, rather than to reason about him. To the next it was given to assert and define his deity. To the next, not so much to reconcile and explain, as to balance over against each other, in an affirmation of his qualities, both his Godhead and his manhood. To us it is given to suggest the inner unity of both, and to find, for the soul of man, a new ground of intimacy with God, a new meaning of the word Father, and in Jesus Christ the discovery of the image of man in God, and the recovery of the image of God in man.