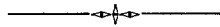


the community at large will continue to supply the corrective to the violence of a stream which has burst its bounds. There must be authority somewhere in religion, or there is no such thing as revelation. Man's reason is too contracted, too undisciplined, to reach the depths of the Infinite. The human conscience seeks to hear the voice of God speaking in unmistakable accents to mankind. The present gross exaggeration of the function of criticism in relation to Divine truth will, like other human systems, "have its day and cease to be." But the Church of God as a whole will never lose sight of the fundamental fact that when God has thought fit to speak man must listen and adore. Human reason may seek to interpret His utterances, it may endeavour to comprehend the conditions under which they were made, but it must not question the authority of the utterances themselves. The whole Bible as it stands, from Genesis to Revelation, plainly states that God revealed Himself to mankind in a certain order and in a certain way. It is not open to us, as members of the Christian Church, to contest this statement. If human ingenuity finds difficulties in it, we may be sure that those difficulties will be ultimately resolved. As St. Peter tells us, when God speaks "man is not entitled to put his own value on the utterance. For from no human will did His Voice proceed, but men borne along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."¹

J. J. LIAS.



ART. IV.—THE INCARNATION BY VIRGIN BIRTH ONLY.

IF Jesus had been the son of Joseph and Mary, He would have been, like all others who have been born of two human parents, a person. But the Word, Who was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God, was also a person. Hence, if the Word could have become incarnate in the son of Joseph, there would have been a junction of two distinct persons in one body, each a distinct *ego*, each self-conscious. The Son of God could not have been the son of Joseph; the son of Joseph could not have been the Son of God. The conversation between our Lord and the blind man whom He had healed would have been impossible. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He said. The man answered: "And

¹ 2 Pet. i. 20, 21 : πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται. Οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἤνέχθη ποτέ προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ Πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.

who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Jesus said unto him: "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that speaketh with thee." But the man would see the son of Joseph, not the Son of God; and though the words might express the thoughts of the Son of God, the sounds which the man heard would have been the voice of the son of Joseph. Such a junction would not have been an incarnation, but a possession—like the other possessions which we read of in the Gospels, except that they were possessions by evil spirits, and this would have been by a good spirit. When our Saviour said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," He would have been misleading them, for they would naturally suppose that the speaker was the man whom they saw; whereas the man whom they saw—the son of Joseph—would have been overmastered and silenced by the Son of God, and compelled, as a mere instrument, to say things which—as those who heard them were obliged to understand them—would not have been true. Instead of incarnation, there would have been impersonation.

"Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" How could such a question have been asked honestly, when the man whom the hearers saw had, whether they had seen it or not, committed sin like all other men, unless, indeed, we invent an immaculate conception for the child of Joseph and Mary?

Why do I go into these hateful details? Because I wish to show that the false incarnation involves far more difficulties than the true. Our Lord's favourite title was Son of man; but on the impersonation theory He was not Son of man, but Son of God only. The son of Joseph had no more power to forgive sins than any other man. When one man forgives another, and says so, is it his tongue and his other vocal organs that forgive, or is it the person, the man himself, who forgives, and uses his voice just as he might have used, for the same purpose and to the same effect, pen and paper?

"This is My body which is given for you." But under the false incarnation it would not have been the body of the Son of God, but only the body of the son of Joseph; and so we should come to the ancient heresy, that it was not the Christ that was crucified, but someone else in His stead. "Suffered for us under Pontius Pilate" would be all a mistake. The son of Joseph would have suffered, died, and been buried; whether it is possible for a Person of the Holy Trinity to suffer by sympathy we cannot tell. It is quite impossible for him to be crowned with thorns, buffeted and spit upon, scourged and crucified, unless he is something more than the *Logos*, the Thought and Utterance of the Almighty.

When our Lord said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger,

and see My hands," and "Reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side," He would have been deceiving Thomas as much as Jacob deceived Isaac. The hand and the sides would not have been His, but those of the man who was crucified.

Why should the son of Joseph be taken up to heaven? Would the Divine Word need to wear a bodily mask among the angels? How could He who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh be declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, unless He had been the Son of God from His conception? How could the son of Joseph and Mary be the Lamb of God, any more than the son of Abraham was, or the ram that was offered in his stead? Look at the wonderful figure in the first chapter of the Revelation. John, who wrote that chapter, had known intimately both Jesus and His Mother. Could he, unless quite bereft of his senses, have described that figure as once dead, and afterwards alive for evermore, and having the keys of death and Hades—nay, as the First and the Last and the Living One—if he who died and lived again had had his beginning like all other men, and He who was the First and the Last and the Living One was an entirely different person, who had chosen to dwell in the other, but was not and could not be the same with him?

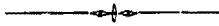
And what will be the relation of Christian people to Jesus if He is no more than an impotent screen or mask through which the Son of God speaks to us? How can we have that mind in us which was also in Him, who, being in the form of God, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, if He did not really humble Himself to die on the cross, but compelled Joseph's son to die on it, stifling any remonstrance which he might make, and so bringing him as a dumb lamb to the slaughter, either against his will or by overmastering his will? Even if the man's will was overmastered by a spiritual revelation of divine love, as the wills of martyrs have been, still, Joseph's son would only be the prince of martyrs, not at all that divine person whom Christians have hitherto believed to have been Himself the sufferer. In that case, all the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews falls to the ground. The sacrifice for sins was only symbolical, like those under the law—one more victim added to the number of those which could never take away sins. When we pray to Christ, which Christ do we pray to—the son of Joseph, or the Son of God? Which are we to have in us as our hope of glory? When we go to the Lord's Table, it is not His own body and blood that the Lord offers us, it seems, but the body and blood of a mere man like ourselves.

No doubt it is profoundly possible that a man can become

a, son of God. Besides that sonship, which we all have by creation, there is another sonship by water and the Spirit. But this is not incarnation, and to accomplish that there is no revealed process, except that by which the Son, Who is the Word of the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance.

Little did Newman think, when he wrote his first Tract in 1833, that now, in 1903, such things should happen in the Church of England as the pitiful doings at St. Michael's, Shoreditch, and the more pitiful belittling of the Virgin birth of Jesus! But the seed of Tract XC. was in Tract I.; and Tract XC. contained the seed, not only of St. Michael's, Shoreditch, but also of that illusory incarnation which is now being substituted for the birth of the Son of God. If clergymen may explain away the anti-papal Articles, they may explain away the Incarnation. Far as the two explanations may seem from each other, they probably have a common source, and they certainly tend in one direction. If men can no longer be sure that they have a Saviour in the Church of England, some of them will seek one in the Church of Rome. Better, they will say, to believe too much than to remain in a communion whose pastors and masters play fast and loose with the very foundation of Christianity; while others will probably drift away into an aimless and hopeless agnosticism, with no better guide to morals than impulse or fashion.

J. FOXLEY.



ART. V.—THE VALUE OF PROPHECY AS AN EVIDENCE OF REVELATION.

THE final discourses of our Lord to His disciples afford a remarkable illustration of the practical value of prophecy as an evidence of revelation. Three times in these discourses does He impress on them the fact that He was warning them beforehand of what was about to come to pass, in order that, when it had come to pass, they might believe. The first instance is when He is referring to His approaching betrayal. "The Scripture," He said, "will be fulfilled: he that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me. And now I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." The second instance is in reference to His approaching departure. "Ye have heard how I said, I go away and come again unto you. And now," He adds, "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." The third follows in