

heaping up the faggots which were to form his funeral pyre.<sup>1</sup>

It is perhaps worth noticing, as shewing the continuance in the Church of Smyrna of the same phraseology as that in the passage before us, that, in the Epistle which purports to be addressed to Polycarp by Ignatius of Antioch, the term "synagogue" is applied to Christian assemblies, and that the narrative of the martyrdom ends with describing him as having obtained the crown (*στέφανος*) of incorruption.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

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### THE PROLOGUE OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

#### III.—THE TRUTH AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE PERSON OF JESUS CONTAINED IN THE PROLOGUE (*concluded*).

It was necessary, first of all, that He should lay aside all the attributes which constituted his Divine condition; and we have already seen that the text of Scripture teaches this renunciation both directly and indirectly. Next, it was necessary that the Divine Subject should consent to lose for a time the consciousness of Himself as such. The consciousness of such a peculiar relation to God, and the recollection of a life anterior to this earthly existence, would be incompatible with the condition of a true child and with a really human development. Now, the Gospel narratives nowhere attribute to Jesus, until his baptism, the consciousness of Himself as *Logos*. The saying which he uttered when

<sup>3</sup> Mart. Polyc. c. 12, 13.

He was twelve years old contains indeed the conviction of a close relationship to God and of a special vocation to labour in his service. But with a moral fidelity like his, and imbued with a feeling of nearness to God which nothing could alter, the Child could call God his Father in a purely religious sense, and without its following that He could from that moment call Himself his Son, still less *the* Son. Besides, for all we know, his mother may have disclosed to Him some of the miraculous circumstances of his birth. Who can measure the amount of confidence with which such a Child would inspire his mother? On the supposition that she had done so, the expression "*My Father*" would be still more easily explained, apart from any necessity of supposing that the Child had attained the consciousness that He was the Logos. As to the conviction of his mission, it might be developed at that age, from the contrast continually presented to his mind between his own holiness and the sin which He saw in every one about Him, not excepting Mary and Joseph. Being the only healthy person in the caravan of sick people with which he was travelling, his heart, filled with charity, must early have taught Him his vocation as a physician.

The Gospel history, however, does not mention a single word or fact which attributes to the child Jesus any consciousness of his Divine nature and previous existence. It is in the apocryphal Gospels that we must look for this unnatural and anti-human Jesus. According to Scripture, the Logos renounced both the state and consciousness of his Divine existence. These were the negative con-

ditions of the Incarnation. The following are its positive conditions, and it suffices to compare with them the known facts of the Gospel history to judge whether they have been fulfilled.

1. Man being a creature conscious of himself and endowed with moral responsibility, the Logos, in descending to the level of man, had to humble Himself to the condition of such a free and intelligent personality as we all possess. This personality, in the consciousness which it had of itself, did not feel itself the Logos, but that truly human being who, under the name of Jesus, was developing there before the eyes of all.

2. Man being created in the image of God, and the principal feature of this image being aspiration after God,—receptivity for the Divine, this was necessarily the prominent feature in the human development of the Logos. Aspiration after God, religious receptivity in its highest degree of energy, constituted the proper characteristic of his being.

3. In consequence of the preponderance in us all of the character of the individual over that of the race, our measure of receptivity for the Divine is limited. But if in the Logos made flesh there is realized a second time, and to a much higher degree than in the first Adam, the idea of the race as such, the religious capacity of all will for this very reason be found concentrated in Him alone. He will thus be able to receive from on high, not only what the best endowed man, but what the entire human race, may be able to receive of God. This religious receptivity, which forms the essence of human nature, He will possess perfectly and without measure.

4. As humanity appears to have been destined from the first to be elevated to the Divine condition, and as the true man, in the Divine idea, is the *God-man*—Satan is well aware of this, and it is from this Divine predestination that he has derived, and will derive to the end, his most dangerous snares—the dominant aim in the life of the Logos made flesh will be to realize, in Himself first of all, this elevation of humanity to the Divine condition, and, then, by reproducing his being in us, to make us sharers in it also. The accomplishment of this task will be, as far as concerns Himself, and subsequent to the recognition of Himself as the Logos, *the recovery of his own glory*; while in respect to us, it will be the realization of the eternal *gift* which the Father has made of us to Him.

5. Lastly, would it be to pass beyond the limits assigned to the human understanding to ask whether this collective receptivity of humanity for the Divine, of which the Logos, having become man, is the perfect organ, is not substantially identical with the receptivity of the Logos Himself relatively to God? (*ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*, v. 1.) We are the work of the Logos, and bear his image. What the Logos is relatively to God in a Divine form, is not man this in time and in a finite form—the free organ of God? Under such conditions, the entrance of a Divine subject into the human state, and its development therein, no longer presents anything contradictory. It only remains to describe the phases of its existence as well as the mode and stages of its restoration to the Divine state.

By such a birth humanity finds itself restored to

its original starting-point; it is in a condition to begin afresh its normal development, which had been interrupted by sin. Up to the age of thirty Jesus accomplishes the moral and religious task of primitive humanity, the task namely of complete obedience and self-sacrifice inspired by a growing love for God and men. As yet He does not know Himself; perhaps, however, by the light of the Scriptures He begins to have a presentiment as to who He is. But the distinct consciousness of his supreme dignity as Logos would be incompatible with the reality of his human development and the accomplishment of the task assigned to this early period of his life.

This task having been fulfilled, the conditions change. A new development opens before Him, and the consciousness of his dignity as Logos, so far from being incompatible with this new phase, that of his ministry, becomes its indispensable basis. In order to testify concerning Himself He must know who He is. To reveal the Father, He must know God is the Father and feel Himself Son. If He is to manifest his glory, He must possess the secret of it.

The baptism is the critical event which separates this new phase from the preceding.<sup>1</sup> Meeting the aspirations and presentiments of the heart of Jesus, the Father says to Him, "*Thou art my Son,*" and thus witnesses to his spirit of those unique eternal

<sup>1</sup> Since the Gnostics falsified the meaning of the baptism by making it the epoch of the descent of the Divine Æon into the man Jesus, M. de Ringement is the first who has ventured to give to this event all its value in the personal development of the Lord. (See "*Christ et ses Temoins,*" t. i. pp. 229-296; particularly pp. 250-255.)

ties which bound Him to Himself. From that moment Jesus knew Himself as the absolute object of the Divine delight. He could say what He could not have said before, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" He possessed this consciousness of Sonship as the ground-plan of all subsequent manifestations, the reward of his previous fidelity, the revelation of his eternal essence. At the same time *heaven was opened* to Him, that is to say, his eye fathomed the depths of the Divine plans, and he had a perfect knowledge of whatever was necessary for the accomplishment of his Messianic work. From that moment He could say, "*We testify that which we have seen.*" Lastly, humanity was raised in Him to a supernatural or spiritual life which had never appeared before, because it had never found a worthy and efficient organ on the earth; *the Holy Spirit descended*. And, for the service of propagating this higher life, He felt Himself master of all things.

Whilst, however, the baptism restored to Jesus the consciousness of his Sonship, it did not restore Him to his Divine *condition*, his *form of God*. He had command, as the beloved Son, of all the treasures of wisdom and power that are hid in God, the assurance of his filial dignity giving Him access to them; but He possessed nothing as his own, therefore He could still say, "*Father, give me my glory.*"

It was by the ascension that his assumption of the Divine condition was accomplished, and his position raised to the level of the consciousness which He had of Himself from the time of his

baptism. From that moment He became possessed, and as Son of Man too, of all the Divine attributes, of the condition belonging to the Son of God, just as He possessed it previous to his incarnation; *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead* BODILY (Col. ii. 9). And ten days after He had been received up into Divine glory He began, by Pentecost, that glorification of the Church which will be perfected by his Parousia.

Thus we behold God's plan concentrated in the person of Jesus. The first word of history, "*Ye shall be as gods,*" will also be the last. Created in the image of the Logos, the end of our development the possession of his glory. We have only to place ourselves relatively to Him in that same state of receptivity in which He has kept Himself relatively to the Father (vi. 57), and his will will be accomplished. "*Where he is, there we shall be with him*" (xvii. 24).

We cannot see in what way this conception of the Incarnation infringes on the true humanity of the Lord. Man is a vessel designed for the reception of God, but in successive measures and by a free advancement. He is a vessel which enlarges as it fills, and which must be filled as it enlarges. The Logos is also the vessel of Divinity, put eternally equal thereto and completely full. In accordance with this affinity and this difference between the Logos and man, this is what appears to us to be the formula of the Incarnation, as drawn from the whole Gospel of John: THE LOGOS REALIZED IN JESUS, IN THE FORM OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AND SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF DEVELOPMENT

AND PROGRESS, THAT RELATION OF DEPENDENCE AND FILIAL COMMUNION WHICH HE REALIZED IN HEAVEN IN THE IMMUTABLE FORM OF THE DIVINE LIFE.

We have dealt with the question of the relations of the Logos to humanity. We have yet to glance at the relation of the Logos to God Himself.

What was the form of existence of the Logos before his Incarnation, and how is the nature of such a being to be conceived of? St. Paul calls Him the *image* of the invisible God, and St. John designates Him the *Word*. These two expressions contain primarily the idea of an internal revelation taking place within the depths of the Divine essence. God affirms, with an eternal affirmation, all that He thinks, wills, loves; this is possible, because He is eternally conscious of Himself. This affirmation is at once his absolute word and his perfect image. And this word is not a *verbum volans*; it is a living personal being, who—if we may apply to God an expression which is only appropriate to man—might be called *his realized ideal*. Let us imagine what the masterpiece of an artist, in which he had embodied the full wealth of his genius, would be to him were it to become alive, conscious of itself, and capable of entering into personal relations with its author; such in God, and for God, is the Word. This Word cannot but be Divine; for the highest affirmation of God cannot be other than God Himself, God being unable to think, will, or love anything higher than God. Such, we conceive, is the true meaning of the term Word. Before signifying *God revealed*, this word signifies *God affirmed*. The Word is in God the *Word spoken*



before being the *Word speaking*. This is why the Prologue describes the Word first of all as turned towards God, and only afterwards in his relations with the world. The first direction constitutes his essence: the second is an act of grace in Him. The term Son belongs entirely to the sphere of his relation with God, and only concerns us because the gift of the Son demonstrates the boundless nature of the Divine love for mankind. The term Word is more general. It embraces the eternal relation of this Being with God as well as his relation with the world in time. And this undoubtedly is the reason why from the very first John made use in the Prologue of the name Word, and introduced the title Son only subsidiarily and in place of it.

This God affirmed is unique as well as the God affirming. He is the *only (unique) Son*. The Word is the absolute *enunciation (énoncé)* of God, his sole *utterance (dire)*, his unique primordial edict in which are contained all his particular edicts. Every subsequent word which shall be realized in time is contained in this unique Word, and will never subsist but in Him: *ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκε τὰ πάντα* says St. Paul (Col. i. 17). In giving eternal utterance to this Word, that is to say, in begetting this Being, God speaks all his Being, and this Word in his turn will speak all other beings. They will all be his free affirmation, as He is God's. The Word manifests in time, by means of creation, all the Divine riches which in the eternal order God included in Him. *Creation is a poem by the Word to the glory of the Father*. This notion of the Word as the

creative principle is, as Lange<sup>1</sup> has admirably shewn, of the greatest importance for the conception of the universe. Blind and eternal matter, fatal necessity, find no place in a view at the basis of which is placed the Word. The creative Word is the pledge of the ideal and luminous essence of the world made visible in its inward substance, and in all the relations of the beings composing it.<sup>2</sup>

From the supreme dignity of Christ results the capital importance of his appearing upon the stage of the world. If He is the Word made flesh, He is also the manifestation and absolute communication of God, eternity come down into time, man's highest blessings, Divine grace and truth put within the reach of his faith. After such a gift from the Father, there is nothing better to expect. For mankind there remains only one alternative: to take it and live, or to reject it and perish.

If, on the contrary, this supreme dignity of Jesus be denied, his appearing has only a relative value, and Christianity is only "one of the days of human-

<sup>1</sup> "Leben Jesus," t. iv. pp. 553-556.

<sup>2</sup> We do not think that we have to concern ourselves here with the questions as to the internal relations of the Divine Being which are suggested by the view we have just given of the dogma of the Incarnation. Since in our judgment the Divine existence of the Son belongs to the sphere of love (*the bosom of the Father*), and not of metaphysical necessity, as in Philo, we think that when the Word descends into the world and becomes one of the beings of this universe, the Father can enter into direct relations with the world, and exercise in it Himself the functions of creator and preserver, which He ordinarily exercises through the mediation of the Word. We do not forget that, if the Word has life in Himself and communicates it to the world, it is because the Father has *given* it Him and that thus all proceeds from the Father (John v. 26). We have kept in this exposition within the limits of positive revelation, and have only sought to shew the admirable harmony of the facts contained in it.

ity."<sup>1</sup> Excellent as the author of this religion may be, mankind may, and must, always "*look for another.*" For the path of progress has no limit. The door is open to the first comer; and the prediction of Jesus has only to find another fulfilment: "*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another come in his own name, him ye will receive.*" (John v. 43.)

For the Church therefore this is a vital question. John, who lived in the midst of those first conflicts which were the prelude to the last, perfectly understood this. He had therefore his reasons for placing this Prologue in the fore-front of his Gospel. In order that faith may be faith, it must be absolute, without any after-thought, without admitting even the possibility of contradiction, and to be this, its object must be perfect; as an object of knowledge as well as of life, it must be what can never be surpassed. Such is the practical bearing of the Prologue of John, and such its intimate connection with the subsequent narrative. F. GODET.

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### THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

#### CHAPTER III. VERSES 1-7.

THE Apostle now diverges to another department of practical Christian ethics, and describes the moral and social characteristics of the officers of the Christian Church. He lays down no law of ecclesiastical organization. He does not review the

<sup>1</sup> Lerminier.