they have their reward. But why do children do good? Because their father bids them do it.

And just here lies all the secret that there is in this much discussed Sermon on the Mount. How hard, men say, it is; who among us can live up to it? The difficulty with it is not that it is so hard, but that it is so easy. The child does what the father bids him, does it simply, does it easily. But he must be a child first. Hard? The Sermon on the Mount is either easy or else it is altogether impossible.

The Person of our Lord.


I.

The Definition of the Fourth General Council has proved to be the high-water mark of confessional Christology, though not quite the latest of conciliar utterances on the subject. Not, however, because it solved the problem, for that it did not attempt; it did not even state the difficulty which faith offers to the intellect, and its careful phrasing rather concealed than harmonized the divergent tendencies which in the middle of the fifth century distracted the Church. On the contrary, it has owed its long prominence to the fact that it tried to formulate only the core of truth which is the minimum that faith feels it necessary to say on the mystery of the Incarnate Person. It would be a mistake to ask of any creed what it cannot give—an explanation either of the Person or of the Work of our Saviour. For its function is a different one. Dogmatic theology, indeed, working on the facts, and calling in such aid as it may find in other fields of science or of philosophy, may essay to penetrate a little way into a phenomenon so unprecedented as the Life of Jesus; and so long as this is done in the reverent and cautious temper which befits a sacred mystery, it seems to me to be within its rights. The Chalcedonian definitions are in part positive, in part negative. The positive are limited to two points. First, the true Deity and the complete Humanity of our Lord are affirmed. So much of net result had accrued on the one hand from the long fight with Arianism, on the other from the yet longer resistance to a docetic Christology, culminating in its most seductive shape of Apollinarism. "The Catholic Church," in Leo's words, "lives by this faith, and by this faith makes progress that in Christ Jesus neither is the Humanity to be believed without true Divinity, nor the Divinity without true Humanity." And this result, at least, of the first five centuries of discussion, is accepted by the latest Ritschlian writer on the "Gottheit Christi," Hermann Schultz of Göttingen—however far in many ways he and the school to which he belongs may deviate from the traditional dogma. The second positive affirmation of Chalcedon stands equally firm—the
singleness of our Saviour's blessed Person: 'one and the same Christ'—whichever of the two disputed readings you adopt in the clause that follows: 'recognized in two natures,' or 'out of two natures' (ἐν δύο φύσεων, or ἐκ δύο φύσεων). For I need not stay to discuss the grounds which persuade the bulk of modern scholars to prefer the Western to the Eastern preposition.

These two are the only positive fixed positions, but they are the essential ones. The famous negative adverbs by which Nestorian and Eutychian extremes were shut out are secondary—how far subordinate, I shall not presume to say. At any rate they are no more than danger-flags warning divines against the two forbidden extremes of speculation on the debated question of the relation of Humanity and Divinity to each other. That relation must at least be of such a kind that from it shall issue a unity of Personal Life; neither so loose a union as splits into two personal subjects, or centres of the conscious and moral life, the one theanthropic Saviour of men; nor so close a union as to give us a tertium quid that cannot be called either God or Man. This service of danger-signals the famous adverbs have ever since rendered to faith, which either God or Man. This service of danger-signals the famous adverbs have ever since rendered to faith, which either

the first step on a questionable road. Every student of Church history knows how keenly the innovation was resented, and what a part the objectionable word δύοσις (for which Athanasius himself had no particular liking) played in embittering and prolonging the opposition which the Nicaean Creed encountered. The word had, since the year 325, done its work as a stronghold against the fluctuating and multiformal types of semi-Arianism, and might have been allowed to rest now that that battle was over. But the first step forward which Chalcedon took was to extend the application of the famous adjective to our Lord's humanity as well as to His Deity: δύοσις τῷ Πατρὶ κατὰ τὴν θεότητα καὶ δύοσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἵματι κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα. Already one has to observe here that the word is not employed in both cases in the same sense. Christ's substance as Man is only the same as ours in the sense in which the individuals of the same species are alike; or, as it is explained by the Creed itself, κατὰ πάντα ὁμοιὸν χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας = 'like us in every respect, sin excepted.' But this is not at all the sense in which the Church affirms the Three Distinctions in the Holy Trinity to be 'of one substance.' The δύοσις, or essence of Godhead—that which makes God to be what He is—is not specifically identical only in all the Three Blessed Persons, but is numerically identical, one and the same: a single essence.

Moreover, Chalcedon took another long step on this questionable road. It might have saved a good deal of subsequent debate had this highly abstract term δύοσις, whose footing was already secured in confessional speech, been alone employed in Greek, with of course for the West its equivalent 'substantia' as a vox technica in Western divinity current since the days of Tertullian, or its better translation 'essentia,' more recently introduced, I think, by Augustine. No safer, because no vaguer, term of the schools could be found to denote what we are obliged to think of as Godhead, or that unsearchable Somewhat in which inhere all those powers and attributes of Spirit-life which make up our conception of Deity. But a new and less happy synonym was introduced into the doctrinal definitions of this Council: φύσις = natura. Of course the Council only accepted this word because it was, and had been for some time the catchword of contending parties in the Church. It was probably felt that in no other
way could the error of the Eutychians be explicitly condemned than by declaring in opposition to their teaching that our Lord is to be acknowledged 'in two natures'—'the distinction between which is by no means abolished through their union.' I could be pled, too, that the phrase 'two natures' applied to our Lord had been more or less at home in Church language since Origen. It remains true all the same that this was giving conciliar authority to a word which in such a connexion lay open to more than one objection. With all that recent Ritschlian writers have been repeating in criticism, even in scornful rejection, of the 'Two Natures Doctrine,' I by no means find myself in agreement, as I shall try to explain later on. But the word itself I am compelled to regard as an unfortunate one in this connexion. For one thing, alike in its Greek and in its Latin dress, alike by etymology and by usage, 'nature' connotes something which has come to be, a derived originated thing, in short, a creature, the life or activity of which is straitly determined for it by the mode of its origin and the laws under which it has come into existence. It suggested this then, and it suggests it still more to-day. Wherefore we moderns have come to employ the word for the complex of the physical universe: more and more with a material connotation—the World, as not even including, rather excluding, the unseen world of spiritual being. The word fitted fairly well, therefore, to denote what we call 'human nature,' the composite and originated constitution of our species as a part of the wider world of nature. But it did not so well suit the simple, unbeginning, and unchanging Being of God. In popular language, perhaps, one may occasionally speak of the 'Divine Nature'—as even a New Testament writer does—without being misunderstood. But its introduction into theological, and still more into confessional, speech tended to confusion of thought, and had (as we shall see) harmful results. At the very least, the word means one thing when you speak of the human nature of Jesus, and a very different thing when you speak of His Divine nature. And the transference of a word with such associations to the pure and self-existent Personal Spirit, whose simple essence is known only by His changeless acts of knowing and willing—was to give apparent sanction to physical ideas where spiritual alone were in place. When the Son of God united human nature with Himself, He assumed as His own and as the sphere of His earthly life a complicated and composite whole, having a natural origin, and forming part of the natural world, made up of fleshly body, animal soul, and rational spirit; a whole humanity, the limits and the processes and the laws of which are more or less familiar. But if He who assumed our nature was a Divine Person, then He brought with Him into the union nothing which you can describe as at all comparable or commensurate with human nature, not a second natura of the same or similar kind with the one He assumed, but just the resources of His spiritual Personality, His eternal and unchangeable spiritual powers of being.

And here we encounter yet other terms of the philosophers which no earlier Ecumenical Council than that of 451 had inserted in its creed: the words: πρόσωπον, otherwise ὑπόστασις (for I think the two are meant as synonymous). The use of these metaphysical terms, I admit, was not only amply sustained by the long custom of theologians (though not by the example of earlier Catholic creeds); it seems to me to have been here unavoidable, since it was in the single Personality of Christ that the Council saw the only meeting-place and certain point of union for the 'two natures.' Again the terms are taken over from the earlier doctrine of the Trinity; yet again without taking any notice of the fact that they are not employed in precisely the same sense. Personality is not ascribed to the Sacred Three Distinctions within the unity of Godhead in the same sense in which we are conscious of ourselves as Human Persons. The Church teaches a triple distinction within the Personality of God: Each of the Sacred Three possessing that Personality with a difference, which permits us to speak of personal relationships with Each Other; but it does not simply transfer to the Three such a separate selfhood as we are conscious of possessing in ourselves. If it transfer the word 'Person,' it does so only under careful safeguards. How far this may affect the doctrine that the Person of the Son is become the Personal Centre and focus of our Lord's Human Nature, is a point which I do not remember to have ever seen discussed. Setting that aside, however, there remains the difficulty of placing in so central a position in Christology a term so little understood as 'Person.' The ancient fathers were unquestionably right in their feeling that Personality and Nature, though
never actually found in separation, are yet quite
distinguishable in thought. But the psychology
of the ancients never attained to a quite clear
conception of personality as now understood. The
famous definition, formulated by the writer who
so long passed under the name of Boethius, was
for centuries current in the schools: 'Persona est
nature rationalis individua substantia.' It does
not get beyond the notion of individuality. It is
only since the time of Locke that personality in
the proper sense, of self-conscious selfhood, has
come to be one of the foremost, if not the fore­
most, question in psychology. And it is not too
much to say that in view of the new meaning
which we moderns have come to attach to this
word, much may call for revision in the future,
both in our traditional Trinitarianism and in the
doctrine of our Lord's Person.

Such criticisms as I have now passed on the
metaphysical terms of Chalcedonian Christology
certainly do not predispose us to expect from
further discussion along those lines any very clear
or satisfactory result; especially when we recollect
that it was precisely around those ill-defined terms
of the schools—two natures united in one person,
that christological debate had for two hundred
years revolved, and was fated still to revolve for
centuries to come. The few fixed points laid
down in 451, valuable as they are to faith, offer us
nothing better than hard and meagre outlines of a
doctrine. A Being who combines in an inscrutable
fashion Divine with Human properties, and of
whom consequently contradictory assertions may
be made, whose single Person is Divine, while His
dual natures hold an undefined relation to one
another: this is not a scheme to satisfy either head
or heart. It is but the bare skeleton of a dogma,
in which one cannot readily recognize either the
Jesus of the Gospels or the Christ of the Church’s
worship. It needs to be filled up with the details
of our Saviour’s earthly life, and with the meaning
of His saving work as Revealer of the Father and
Redeemer of man, before we can see in Him the
Person whom Christians trust and love.

Yet it is surprising how long and how com­
pletely the Latin Church remained content with
the formula of Leo as the Council accepted it.
The long interval from Charlemagne till the Re­
formation contributed nothing of consequence to
Christology. So far from betraying any speculative
need for the unifying of the Incarnate Life as the

East had done, mediæval divinity was satisfied to
set the Godhead of our Lord alongside His
humanity with the looest conceivable relationship
between them. God being thought of by the
schoolmen in His metaphysical unchangeableness
was too unlike the creature for any real union of
the one with the other to be thinkable. In
assuming manhood, the Deity could only set Itself
into a new relationship, and begin to operate
through a new organ, nothing more. Once only
in the twelfth century, when the Master of Sen­
tences went so far as to infer that the Son of God
in taking humanity as a robe to wear could not be
said to have become anything other or different
from what He was before, did the Christian instinct
of the Church take fright, so that his Nihilanism
was condemned at a Lateran Council. None the
less Scotist and Thomist for once agreed that the
human soul of Jesus can be but an organ for the
manifestation of the Divine. So long as the Deity
of our Redeemer was present to impart to His
saving Passion an infinite value, it mattered nothing
that the earthly life of growth and limitation
receded before the overmastering Divineness of
the Son of God, till they became logically mere
appearances of human growth and limitation. So
far from stumbling at the fact that a whole series
of affirmations could be made concerning the God­
Man which stood in open contradiction to each
other, mediæval devotion seems positively to revel
in such contradictions. Anselm was one of the
acutest reasoners of the Middle Age; yet let any
one read his Meditations, and he will see how
he labours the seeming unreasonableness of this
sacred mystery. Faith adoring the God-Man exults
in glorious contradictions which baffle intellect.

While the Latin West before Luther never took
kindly to the problem which our Lord’s Person
presents to the thinking of Christendom (for the
brief Adoptionist speculation of Spanish divines
swiftly crushed by Alcuin was but a momentary
exception), that problem exerted a positive fascina­tion
over the Eastern mind. Alike the subtle
Greek and the meditative Syrian made the prob­
lem their own, wrestled with it, split the Churches
over it, and century after century, with a pathetic
tenacity, while little by little the intellectual atmo­
sphere grew murkier and light after light of scholar­
ship and science went out, hung over the mystery
which they could not resolve, as the central mystery
of their faith.